



THE INDEPENDENT

N° 3,883

SATURDAY 23 AUGUST 1997

(P65p) 60p

Magnus Magnusson:
The pass master
thelongweekend



Tina Turner:
Queen of the dance

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Holiday Fun:
1,000
tickets to
the zoo

the eye

WEATHER: Warm and sunny

England bungle their daring daylight robbery

From our Wrong Correspondent

Jason Bennetto
(Crime correspondent)
reports from the
Sixth Test at The Oval



Something to laugh about: Mike Atherton, the England captain, and his team watch a video replay of Alec Stewart's catch to dismiss Ian Healy of Australia, caught between his knees. Photograph: Laurence Griffiths/Allsport

Labour hushes up new scandal

Christian Wolmar
Westminster Correspondent

Labour party managers have delayed publishing the results of an inquiry into a second party scandal in Scotland to avoid further embarrassment in the run-up to next month's devolution vote.

A report into allegations of widespread misbehaviour by Labour councillors in Glasgow is thought to recommend the suspension and possible expulsion from the Labour group of up to half a dozen members and censuring around 20 more. One Labour source said: "When this comes out, if the Labour party investigators have done their job right, it will make

events in Paisley pale into insignificance."

The report has been prepared by a sub-committee of Labour's ruling national executive, and its findings are expected to be damning.

The investigation was launched in June and originally centred around suggestions that councillors were allocated trips on delegations and places on council dinners on the basis of their loyalty when voting in debates in Labour group meetings. Two main factions in Glasgow council centre around the leader, Bob Gould, and his deputy Gordon McDermott.

However, the remit has been extended to cover the political in-fighting in the council, which

has paralysed the leadership, and suggestions that councillors have assaulted members of staff.

One of those who was interviewed by the investigators said: "They were interested in the general conduct of the group and how members behaved."

The Independent has learned that the report, which has been completed, criticises the behaviour of up to a quarter of Labour's 75 councillors in the city and recommends the expulsion of between four and six. Many councillors may face charges under Labour's catch all offence of bringing the party into disrepute.

Although interviews with 50 councillors were completed ear-

ly last month, Labour did not want its findings to emerge until after the 11 September devolution referendum and it is now expected to be presented for approval by the meeting of Labour's ruling National Executive Committee next month.

Labour's image in Scotland has been tarnished by the suspension of two of its MPs in separate investigations. Mohammed Sarwar (Glasgow Govan) and Tommy Graham (Renfrewshire West).

The Tories have capitalised on allegations of Labour "sleaze" and have used pictures of the men on a Tory poster opposing devolution. If full details of the report on Glasgow leaked out, party managers fear the im-

pact on the devolution debate could be catastrophic.

A majority of Glasgow's Labour councillors are full time and many of the complaints centre around the allocation of key committee posts, worth salaries of up to £20,000 for a chairmanship and £12,000 for a deputy chairmanship.

Gordon Archer, who recently defected to the Scottish National Party from Labour said: "These posts are not allocated on the basis of ability, but on the basis of loyalty. If you tow the line, you get a good job, which is pretty rich given that these people are unemployable elsewhere."

There has also been criticism of the use of the Common

Good Fund, a £1m fund obtained from the sale of Glasgow's gasworks in the 1920s and whose proceeds are at the disposal of the Provost (the equivalent of the mayor).

At least £2,000 was allocated to pay for a fleet of limousines to take 20 leading councillors and their spouses to the Edinburgh Tattoo last year and there are also suggestions that money from the fund has been used to pay for councillors' expenses on delegations after their application to go on the trips has been turned down by the relevant committee.

The investigation considered allegations that these councillors were being rewarded for their loyalty. They also heard

Saturday Story, page 14

Millennium Dome may have to move

Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

The millennium dome may have to be moved from its Greenwich home in 2001 because of a split between the two organisations in charge of the project.

The New Millennium Experience Company, NMEC, which is running the year-long exhibition, wants its building to stay on the site as a possible Olympic sports stadium or as a theme park. The company is talking to both the Sports Council and the Tussauds Group about plans to develop the dome.

But sources at English Partnerships, which owns the land, say it would prefer to see the dome moved so that other leisure facilities and parks could be put there for community use.

It plans to use the exhibition car park for houses as part of a new London "urban quarter".

The difference of opinion was revealed after the minister without portfolio, Peter Mandelson, for NMEC, said it was keen to see the dome stay where it was. "We would love to see it staying on the site and for another operator to come in and take it over and use it to its full potential.

It's going to be an internationally famous building and it's going to be a landmark," he said.

Gaz Sagar, spokesman for NMEC, said it was keen to see the dome stay where it was. "We would love to see it staying on the site and for another operator to come in and take it over and use it to its full potential.

It's going to be an internationally famous building and it's going to be a landmark," he said.



Mir to control: our problem is fixed...

Helen Womack
Moscow

After a last-minute panic over

two leaks, Russian cosmonaut Pavel Vinogradov, backed by his commander Anatoly Solov'yov, finally floated into the vacuum of Mir's Spektr module yesterday to restore power to the station which had been impaired since a collision with a cargo craft in June. The success of the high-risk operation changed the run of bad luck on the 11-year-old complex and went a good way to restoring confidence in Russia's cash-strapped space programme.

Michael Foale, the British-born astronaut who took a back seat while his Russian colleagues carried out the space repairs, said yesterday had been a "super day" which showed that Mir, for all its technical faults, was "fixable".

The media had been led to expect that Commander Anatoly Solov'yov, one of Russia's most experienced cosmonauts, would make the dangerous "internal space walk" into the airless Spektr module, where the least little piece of drifting debris could bring death if it punctured a space suit. But he allowed his

junior to become the hero, providing back-up at the hatch while Vinogradov went into the dark hole of Spektr feet-first.

Despite the very real hazards, the cosmonauts kept the mood light by joking with each other and officials at Mission Control.

"There are some white crystals flying around like soap," Vinogradov reported as he floated about in the cramped capsule, illuminated by torch light.

"I think it's my shampoo," the voice of Foale came over the radio. The guest astronaut, whose sleeping quarters had been in Spektr, was sitting for safety in the Soyuz rocket which all three spacefarers would have used in an emergency to evacuate Mir.

It was no laughing matter earlier in the day when two leaks were found, one in the docking chamber just outside the module and one in the left-hand glove of Vinogradov's suit.

Once inside Spektr, Vinogradov began reconnection 11 cables which had to be unplugged after the June collision. This full power returned to Mir, which gets its energy from solar panels covering the exterior, including the outside surface of Spektr.

Concorde on the wild side, page 12

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Backpacker arrest
An Israeli reservist army officer was arrested in connection with the murder of the British backpacker Max Hunter and has confessed his guilt. Page 3

Blair party

Tony Blair and the French prime minister Lionel Jospin had lunch together in the south of France. The three Blair children were given a foal called Justin. Page 9

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Vegetarian CJD victim raises fears of 'time bomb'

The latest victim of the fatal "new variant" Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (v-CJD) probably caught it from food infected with mad cow disease at a time when the disease was "underground" in the food supply, and 10 times less widespread than in the late Eighties. On that basis, there could be a rapid growth over the next 5-10 years in the number of v-CJD cases, with numbers rising steeply in proportion to that of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) – which grew from the first case in 1985 to a peak of 36,681 in 1992.

Roger Tomkins, whose daughter Clare, 24, is in the final stages of the incurable brain disorder, added that Britain could be "sitting on a time bomb" of v-CJD caused by eating meats infected with BSE. Ms Tomkins has been a strict vegetarian since 1985 – when the first case of BSE was identified on a farm about 25 miles from her home in Tonbridge, Kent. Her case indicates that v-CJD can have an incubation period of at least 11 years.

Professor Roy Anderson of the zoology department at the University of Oxford has studied the BSE epidemic, in which 161,000 cases have been confirmed in Britain since 1985. He calculates that 446,000 infected animals were used in the food supply to the end of 1989, when the most infectious parts of the animals – the brains and spinal cords – were harvested, and another 283,000 between 1989 and 1996.

Ms Tomkins is the 25th known v-CJD victim in Britain. In 1995 there were three deaths, in 1996 ten, and 1997 looks set to double last year's figure. If all the cases so far originate from before 1985, the next few years could see a rapid jump.

Charles Arthur

'Big Issue' wins lottery cash

The Arts Council yesterday made the first cash allocations under its £19m Arts for Everyone scheme, and left sellers of the *Big Issue* magazine for the homeless £125,000 better off with a grant for the *Big Issue* Video Training Unit to teach them film- and video making.

This was the first of four awards under the lottery-funded scheme to be made over the next two years. Acting Arts Council secretary-general, Graham Devlin, said the first phase of the scheme could not be geographically fair because applicants were chosen strictly on merit. Nottingham and Suffolk did particularly well with several major grants: Suffolk Dance won £390,000, Wokingham Arts, of mid-Suffolk, received £199,000, Nottinghamshire County Council got £399,000, and Nottingham Playhouse £500,000.

Critical pupil returns to school



A schoolgirl who was expelled for criticising her teachers but then reinstated, said yesterday she had been given an assurance that she would not be victimised. Sarah Briggs, 15 (left), was told she could return to Queen Elizabeth's Girls School at Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, when the new term starts next month. The decision was taken at a meeting of school governors, senior teachers and the family solicitor on Thursday.

Sarah was thrown out last month halfway through her GCSE course after writing to a local newspaper claiming that pupils' work was affected by teachers' absenteeism. Headteacher Nicola Atkin demanded a written apology, but Sarah refused. She wrote a letter to Ms Atkin outlining her complaints and was expelled.

Trevor Phillips, page 15

Tube workers to ballot over strike

A London Underground strike came a step closer yesterday when the Rail, Maritime and Transport workers' union announced that it was to ballot its 5,000 station staff members on industrial action. The move by the union's national executive follows a decision by LU management to impose a 2.7 per cent pay offer which has already been rejected by RMT staff in a referendum.

Husband charged with murder

The husband of missing Sandie Bowen appeared in court yesterday charged with her murder. Forestry worker Mike Bowen, 45, was arrested and questioned for three days by detectives investigating the disappearance of Mrs Bowen. He was charged with her murder on Thursday night and remanded in custody for a week when he appeared before magistrates at Newport, Gwent. His son, Victor, 19, was also arrested but was released without charge.

Mrs Bowen, 53, a catering worker of Llangoed, Gwent, disappeared more than two weeks ago and police launched a major hunt for her. Her husband made an appeal for her to get in touch.

GCSE celebration turns to tragedy

A 16-year-old schoolboy was electrocuted while trying to cross railway line after celebrating his exam results. The youth, who has not been named, was with a friend when he tried to cross the tracks at Sidcup station in south London on Thursday night. He slipped, landed on a live rail and died instantly. British Transport Police said yesterday. It is believed the youth, of Dartford, Kent, gained nine GCSEs. An inquest will be held.

Conscience gets better of thief

A thief with a guilty conscience has handed back computer disks loaded with the vital work of a leading cancer research scientist.

The five disks were left in a private mail box outside a house in Lympstone, Hampshire, and were then handed into police. The disks belong to Professor David Newell, 42, and contain vital research into new drugs for treating cancer patients. The professor, who was bailing at Wimborne, Dorset when the disks were stolen from his car, leads a 20-strong group of scientists at the North of England Cancer Research Campaign based at Newcastle University.

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PACK ISSUES

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people



SIMPLY THE BEST: Fiftysomething grandmother Tina Turner gets more Britons bopping than the Spice Girls, according to a new survey. Asked to name the tune that they just had to get up and dance to, more chose Tina Turner's 'The Best' than the girl group's 'Wannabe'. The *Guinness Book of British Hit Singles* survey of 1,200 people aged between 18 and 55 found that The Prodigy's 'Firestarter' beat 'Wannabe' into third place on the list of top ten dance-floor favourites. Fourth came the Gloria Gaynor classic 'I Will Survive', followed by Abba's 'Dancing Queen'. In the chart of top ten summer songs, Cilla Black took third place with 'Summer Holiday', behind 'Summertime' by Fresh Prince & DJ Jazzy Jeff and 'In the Summertime' by Shaggy. Number one love song was Whitney Houston's 'I Will Always Love You' while 'Orinoco Flow' by Enya was named as the best song to wind down to.

Flagship drama set to sail as Hollick saves Hornblower

Horatio Hornblower is set to sail the high seas again after the most ambitious drama project in the history of TV has been saved by the intervention of Lord Hollick's United News & Media.

The 21st adaptation of the Hornblower books by CS Forester has been running into problems because of delays in building a replica 18th century frigate that will be the star of the Napoleonic adventure stories.

Filming had been due to start in the Black Sea last month but problems with the replica *Indefatigable* which is being built in Turkey caused United News & Media to step in.

"The boat was taking forever to build and there were fears that the whole thing would end up massively over budget," a source on the production has been reported as saying.

So far the only major role to be cast is that of Hornblower himself. For the part played by Gregory Peck in the 1951 Hollywood version, ITV has picked unknown actor Iwan Rheon. Actresses Kate Beckinsale and Samantha Morton have been linked with the part of Hornblower's French mistress.

In addition to the major characters United is hiring 150 extras from the Ukraine for the drama's large battle scenes.

"We always knew this was going to be a mammoth task," said Vernon Lawrence, head of United Film and TV. "But remember this is the third attempt to make Hornblower – Thames tried to do it before and so did the BBC. It is just taking a little longer than expected."

Filming will now start on 14 September but only two of the planned films can be made this year before winter sets in and the production and the crew. The 24-gun frigate has had to be made to modern safety standards while looking as authentic as possible.

Mr Lawrence said: "It was a hugely complicated job which meant it just fell behind schedule."

The vessel is the idea of Surrey boat-builder Michael Turk and is the first hand-built wooden frigate to be built for 150 years. He used the Maritime Museum in Greenwich, south-east London to research its design.

The plan is that if the first four Hornblower films are a ratings success the boat can be used for a long-running series, thereby amortising the building costs over time. It will also be made available to tourist charters to help pay its way and is reportedly destined to be part of Greenwich's Millennium celebrations.

Paul McCann

Actor hurt in 'road-rage' fracas

The actor star Martin Shaw is considering taking legal action against a bus driver whom he claims assaulted him in a road-rage style attack.

Shaw, 51, who played Doyle in *The Professionals*, claims he was almost killed when the driver launched an unprovoked attack on him. He has a three-inch gash under his chin and was seeing an osteopath yesterday for treatment for bruised ribs.

Shaw was cycling to a matinee performance of Oscar Wilde's *An Ideal Husband* at the Haymarket Theatre in London's West End when he became involved in a feud with the driver of the number 52 bus near Hyde Park Corner.

"The bus seemed to come straight at me then the driver threw his lunch box at me through the window. I have no idea what sparked it off. He leapt out of his



Jail threat lifted from eco-warrior

A environmental protester dubbed "Captain Greenpeace" escaped being jailed yesterday after the oil giant BP withdrew legal action against him.

Jon Castle was one of a group of Greenpeace activists involved in the controversial occupation of a drilling rig to publicise the environmental impact of oil exploration on the Scottish coast.

Yesterday he was ordered to appear at the Court of Session in Edinburgh after BP alleged his involvement had breached an earlier court order banning him from taking such action.

The court was told that BP no longer wanted to pursue the action following its decision to abandon a £1.4m claim for damages against Greenpeace.

Richard Keen QC, for BP, the parent company of Britoil plc, said: "In light of the claim for damages that has been withdrawn, it is not the intention of Britoil to insist on this complaint."

Swim star turns tables in homecoming row

Irish swimmer Michelle de Bruin last night turned the tables on the Dublin government in a row over plans to stage no official welcome for her return from the European Championships in Spain.

After stressing that she did not see the move as a snub, De Bruin – who has already won three medals at the European event to

add to the four she collected at last year's Olympic Games – invited Sports Minister Dr Jim McDaid to a reception of her own, which will be held near Dublin Airport on Monday.

Earlier Dr McDaid said he did not want to organise a ministerial

airport welcome as he believed

the spotlight should focus

exclusively on the multi-medal-winner. Distancing his decision from drug-related controversy that has dogged De Bruin's success, Dr McDaid said he would be "delighted" to attend the reception. "I was merely making the point that airport homecomings were not the place for politicians."

briefing

MONEY

Principles before profit as investors get ethical

The ethical investment sector is booming, despite being written off as a hippy-type fad just a few years ago.

New figures indicate that growing numbers of people are becoming more choosy about where their money is invested and do not want supporting activities they oppose such as animal testing or weapons production.

The amount of money invested in ethical unit trusts and investment trusts has more than doubled in the last three years, according to the figures from the Ethical Investment Research Service (EIRIS). In comparison, total funds managed by all UK unit and investment trusts have grown by only 55 per cent.

Ethical investment is defined as choosing investments according to your values and beliefs. Many ethical investors steer clear of companies which, for example, are involved in pesticides, animal testing or nuclear power.

EIRIS says many people with pension plans or endowment mortgages may be indirectly supporting an activity they are opposed to.

The first ethical fund was set up in 1984 and there are now more than 40. Many of them actively seek out environmentally-friendly companies. In June this year the total amount managed by ethical funds was £1.465bn compared with £672m in July 1994.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Shops flouting cigarettes ban

Attempts to catch out tobacconists who sell cigarettes to children by sending youngsters into shops to attempt to make a purchase may be a waste of time, research suggested yesterday.

Surveys of two schools in Gateshead, Tyne and Wear, revealed that large numbers of children under the legal age limit of 16 were buying cigarettes from local shops, with only a small percentage being turned away. But test sales carried out by the local trading standards office – in which a child is recruited to try to buy cigarettes – gave no indication of a problem. Not a single test purchase was made and hence there were no prosecutions.

The surveys, led by paediatrician Dr Mark Bagot from Newcastle University, were conducted at two schools in May 1995 and May 1996. At the first school 39 per cent of girls aged 14 to 15 and 26 per cent of boys were regular smokers. At the second, the figures were 24 per cent of girls and 14 per cent of boys.

A total of 95 per cent of children who regularly smoked bought cigarettes from shops at least once a week. Only 2.5 per cent in 1995 and 6 per cent in 1996 reported ever having had someone refuse to sell them cigarettes. The findings are reported in yesterday's *British Medical Journal*.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Adoption procedures criticised

Local authorities are providing a poor quality adoption service, a report revealed yesterday.

Inspections of seven local authorities by the Social Services Inspectorate found the adoption process is littered with avoidable delays, poor management and monitoring. The report – *For Children's Sake Part II: An Inspection of Local Authority Post-Placement and Post-Adoption Services* – documents the radical changes in the needs of children placed for adoption over the last decade.

The agency's chief inspector, Sir Herbert Laming, said adoption services must be improved so that adopted children and adults get the service they deserve.

The findings of recent inspections in seven local authorities raise questions about whether social services departments are responding to the challenges presented by adoption.

Delays in the adoption process, post-adoption support for adoptive and birth families, services for adopted adults, and a lack of commitment to inter-country adoption are the key issues which need to be addressed, he said.

Paul Boateng, Under-Secretary of State for Health, said the findings of the report must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

SHOPPING

Heatwave fuels fan sales

The recent humid weather has made fans a hot item for Britain's major electrical retailers said today.

John Lewis said its total sales were 7 per cent up last week compared with the same week a year ago, despite the temperatures making for "less than ideal" shopping conditions. Brian O'Callaghan, director of trading, said: "The remarkable number of fan sales recorded had much to do with a sparkling electrical performance."

A spokeswoman for Comet, the high street electrical chain, said sales had doubled in the last couple of weeks although she could not give figures. Dixons, which owns Currys as well as its own brand stores, said sales of fans were rising. "It is clearly down to the hot weather," said a group spokesman.

John Lewis said the hot weather had also benefited sales of garden furniture, sales of which rose by 66 per cent and gardening items, where sales were up 40 per cent.

FOOD

What sandwiches say about you

Women prefer prawns – that was the clear message that emerged yesterday from a survey of lunchtime sandwich-eating habits.

Four hundred and fifty young working women took part in the survey by Bread for Life – a campaign encouraging people to eat more bread as part of a healthy balanced diet – and one in five chose prawn on wheat germ bread as their favourite. Donna Dawson, a psychologist, feels this choice reflects an independent high-flier with an interest in health and fitness.

The bacon butty came a close second with 19 per cent of votes, revealing a traditional, romantic, sociable and home-loving woman.

Egg salad on brown bread also pulled in 19 per cent of votes, indicating a confident but cautious personality type.



NEWSPAPERS SUPPORT RECYCLING

Recycled paper made up 43.6% of the raw material for UK newspapers in 1996

LISTEN TO A VIOLIN CONCERTO BEING PLAYED BY A BELL.

THE PROMS SUNDAY 7.30 PM. JOSHUA BELL PLAYS BARBER'S VIOLIN CONCERTO. LIVE ON THREE. AS

Hypnosis reveals backpacker's killer

Eric Silver
Jerusalem
and Jojo Moyes

A retired Israeli army officer confessed yesterday to the murder of British backpacker Max Hunter, as the law graduate's seriously injured girlfriend prepared for an emotional meeting with his parents.

Daniel Okev, a 45-year-old retired major, shot Mr Hunter, 22, and wounded Charlotte Gibb, 20, after giving them a lift from the Red Sea resort of Eilat 10 nights ago. He was arrested

at his home near Tel Aviv early yesterday after an intensive manhunt by a team of about 100 detectives, undercover officers and forensic scientists.

Mr Okev, who is married with two children, was remanded in custody for 15 days by a Beer-sheba magistrate. When the police picked him up, he said: "I was expecting you."

A police spokesman said Mr Okev, who works for a private transport company, could not explain why he had shot Mr Hunter. Police praised Miss Gibb for her courage, after she

was hypnotised to provide details of the murderer.

News of his arrest came as she prepared for a visit from Mr Hunter's parents - their first meeting since the attack - at Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge, where she is recovering.

"She is quite prepared for the meeting," said David Adlam, an oral and maxillofacial consultant. "I think if anything she is more concerned for them than she is for herself."

Mr Adlam talked in detail yesterday for the first time about Miss Gibb's injuries and

her "million-to-one" escape. He said the bullet which went through her face had amazingly done very little damage.

"I think it's fair to say it's a miracle really. The bullet managed to miss every vital nerve in her face," he said. "Had the trajectory been altered by millimetres it would have gone straight into her brain and killed her. I think it must be a million-to-one chance."

Her parents had been with her constantly in shifts, Mr Adlam said.

"Psychologically she is just

starting to come to terms with it... she is in excellent spirits, but it is only a week or so after the event and she is only really starting to come to terms with the whole thing," he said.

Before returning to England, Miss Gibb was interviewed under hypnosis and gave the investigators information about a grey-haired man in his forties, which helped the police to build up a profile of the killer.

Police believe that Mr Okev had been to the casino at the Taba Hilton and was returning to his home, 300 miles north of Eilat, when he picked up the British couple at a petrol station around midnight on 13

August. He suddenly shot them after stopping for a cigarette on the Negev desert road. According to the police, he drove back to Taba and slept the night in the hotel.

Detectives traced the car to Mr Okev's home in the commuter village of Even Yehuda, north-east of Tel Aviv. The car and its owner were kept under surveillance. Police secretly searched the car and found Mr Hunter's fingerprints inside. Ballistics experts identified a licensed gun owned by Mr Okev as the murder weapon.

IN TOMORROW'S
INDEPENDENT

Five sections for the best in news, features, sport, business, travel, politics and money



THE QUEEN
AND I ...

Dame Judi Dench on playing Victoria

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The very latest official lists of university and college places

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THIS SUNDAY
PREVIEW
The week's TV and radio listings

IT IS. ARE YOU?

Mad dogs and Morris Men set out on holiday

Lucy McDonald and Louise Hancock

Hopes that the hot spell would continue for the bank holiday were fading yesterday with a more traditional damp holiday weekend forecast.

Despite the break in the recent heatwave, 3 million undaunted holidaymakers flocked to the coast amid predictions of chaos on the roads.

In the Peak District, the Saddleworth Morris Dancers have been collecting rushes ahead of a break in the weather in a ceremony that revives a tradition that ran up against church authority early in the last century.

In a tradition dating back to druidical times, two tons of rushes are collected each August, loaded on a rush cart and taken to the parish church of St Chad in Saddleworth, to spread on its floor - originally to form a compost to warm the church through the winter.

In the early 19th century a local bishop objected to the church being used like a cattle shed and rush spreading in the church was reportedly abandoned. A rush cart was last pulled in anger in Saddleworth in 1921, but the ceremony was revived when the Morris men built a new cart.

Traffic on some of Britain's principal routes was moving at the speed of a rush cart yesterday afternoon, as holidaymakers set off early in an attempt to beat the jams. The RAC reported seven mile northbound tailbacks on the A34 at Newbury. By mid-afternoon the M5/M6 link near Birmingham was practically at a standstill.

An AA spokeswoman confirmed: "We'd expect this area to be busy late afternoon on a Friday, but these jams have started to build up two hours earlier than normal - and it's clearly going to get a lot worse."

Steve Upsher, of the AA, said: "It's the last bank holiday before Christmas, people tend to make their plans well in advance and want to make the most of their free time whatever the weather."

The RAC cited the M4 and M5 in the West Country, and the M6 up to the Lake District as well as all routes out of London, as likely traffic hot spots.

With up to 5 million extra vehicles anticipated on the roads this weekend, the AA expects up to 45,000 call-outs.

As the dash to the coast and countryside began, holidaymakers were warned by the British Heart Foundation to take care over the weekend.

A spokesman said: "The combination of travel, hot weather and air pollution could spell a health risk for some. Travel makes people frailer and humid weather seems to make them less tolerant."

Although the weekend weather is unlikely to match the recent high temperatures, Martin Rouley, of the Meteorological Office, predicted that "despite a high risk of rain over much of the UK, with the South-east likely to experience the heaviest showers, there will be sunny periods and temperatures could reach as high as 25C."

Nevertheless, some holidaymakers are taking no chances with the notoriously fickle British weather, as record numbers went abroad. Heathrow and Gatwick were anticipating a combined total of more than 1.5 million passengers as Britons head for European destinations such as Corfu and Malaga, where temperatures are expected to reach 30C.

With the bookmakers offering odds of 4/6 that London, Glasgow or Cardiff will see rain during the bank holiday, Graham Sharpe, of William Hill, had to admit: "If there is one certainty you can always bet on, it is that bank holiday weather will be unpredictable."



Take to the hills: Aaron Daniels (centre) and fellow Saddleworth Morris Men collect rushes to be spread on the floor of the parish church tomorrow

Photographer: Carl Royle

Comics plead for BBC subscription to replace licence



Programmed for success: Birds of a Feather, one of the comic creations of Laurence Marks and Maurice Gran who attacked their BBC bosses in the MacTaggart Memorial Lecture

Paul McCann
Media Correspondent

The BBC licence fee should be replaced with a voluntary subscription of £10 a month so that the creative talent in television can be paid what they are worth, the television industry was told last night.

The comedy writers Laurence Marks and Maurice Gran made a wide-ranging attack on broadcasting bosses in the annual MacTaggart Memorial Lecture at the Edinburgh International Television Festival.

They argued that the only solution to an industry where

writers are undervalued and

have no creative control was to

pump more money into the

system by charging a realistic

price for the BBC.

"In 1995/96 the average person spent nearly 24 hours a week watching television, nearly half his or her free time," said Laurence Marks. "This average person spends about 10 hours of his 24 watching the BBC. For those 10 hours of entertainment,

information, news, sport, drama and Noel Edmonds he pays, according to the BBC's own figures, about 50p per week."

But the BBC was the main focus of their attack: "The creative leaders within the BBC have been marginalised. The power that the creative staff once had has been usurped by legions of lawyers, accountants, business affairs executives and policy unit apparatchiks."

"The BBC believes it must

maintain market share to justify the licence fee," said Mr Marks. "This forces the BBC to shadow ITV's programming as it moves remorselessly towards the safe, the repetitive and the cloned. This is particularly noticeable in drama. If ITV has a vet," added Mr Marks, "the BBC wants a vet. If ITV has a moody cop, the BBC wants a moody one."

All broadcasters were criti-

cised for wanting to keep too

much of the money from selling

programmes to themselves

and were compared unfavourably to America where writers are treated and paid like stars.

They pair made scathing attacks on all three of the terrestrial networks: "The broadcasters take us all for granted. The creative talent, writers and producers who actually make television. They prefer to concentrate their cash, care and chauffeur-driven cars for the front-of-camera talent - soap stars, celebrity chefs and Hale and Pace," said Mr Marks.

"At ITV they want more of the same in drama, and dumb-

er, cheaper people shows in

the same in drama, and dumb-

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Your money, or the pet gets microwaved

Ian Burrell

Everyone knows the urban myth about the absent-minded old lady who put her poodle in the microwave in a misguided attempt to dry it out.

But the myth is being turned into reality in a sickening criminal trend adopted by robbers and thugs to intimidate their victims.

For purposes of blackmail or revenge, pets are being forced into microwaves before the

eyes of their frightened owners. If the ovens are switched on the animals are cooked from the inside with a blast of short electro-magnetic waves.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Animals said last night that it was appalled that people were prepared to subject pets to such torture and would be seeking prison sentences for those found culpable.

Scotland Yard said yesterday it was looking for a gang who seized a couple's cat and put it

in the microwave after forcing their way into their home in St John's Wood, north London.

The thieves threatened to cook the cat unless the couple gave them the combination to their safe and later escaped with antique jewellery, watches and other goods worth £18,500.

The three robbers struck as the husband, 53, parked his car at home after watching a football match at Arsenal.

They demanded the man's Rolex watch, before punching

him in the face and forcing him into the house, where they threatened to cut his 46-year-old wife's throat and kill the couple's cat.

The raiders then took the woman's Cartier watch before searching the house and using the cat as a blackmailing tool. When the safe was opened the cat was released unharmed.

But a worse fate befell Jasper, a kitten, who was forced into a microwave by a man whose advances to the animal's

owner had been spurned at a party.

Brendan Blennerhassett, 24, was jailed for six months this week at a court in County Durham after being found guilty of deliberately killing the 12-week-old kitten.

A court heard that he had carried out the attack after Jasper's owner, who he had earlier met at a night club, rejected him at a party later the same evening.

Vicky Allen, 20, had brought

her kitten to the party, so that it would not be left alone at home. Ms Allen cried as she told the court that she had tried to save the stricken animal.

"I took it out and tried to revive it but it died."

Ann Morris, chairwoman of the hench in Houghton-le-Spring, Co Durham, said: "The torture and death of a much loved and defenceless 12-week-old kitten is a thoroughly despicable offence."

By a strange twist of fate, the

microwave was invented to meet a need to heat hamsters humanely in 1950s laboratories.

James Lovelock and other scientists developed the technology while working on experiments concerned with the preservation of living tissue.

Hamsters which had been subjected to a gloving process needed to be revived through warmth without burning their skins.

Since then, partly thanks to the spread of urban myth, the

image of the pet in the microwave has become the source of dubious humour. The comedians Hale and Pace made their names through the controversy which followed an infamous sketch depicting a cat being microwaved.

The RSPCA has looked on in horror as a new form of pet torture has evolved in British homes. It has on its books a case where a 13-year-old boy killed the family whippet in the microwave for "fun".

Gold card becomes the new designer accessory

Nic Cicutti
Personal Finance Editor

There is always one in any crowd. The woman who took the plunge and finally bought brown, just as the others went for charcoal grey. The guy who goes into flares, when everyone switched to straight-leg trousers, and back again.

American Express, the world's largest card company, yesterday performed a similar stunt in the financial services world, as it finally launched a gold credit card - years after the opposition cleaned up in the same market.

The new launch comes four years after an explosion in the gold sector, with the number of cards tripling from 800,000 in 1993 to well over 2.5 million today.

Saturation levels in the standard card market have led many banks to launch gold options with the aim of capitalising on higher spenders - who deliver greater profits to their issuers.

Among the 20-plus issuers to have stolen a march on American Express in the past few years is the tiny Leek United Building Society.

Pauline Roessler, marketing

manager at the Leek, 26th in the league table of UK societies, said: "We have always argued that small is beautiful. When we want a decision we don't need to go to 700 separate committees to get it."

Ms Roessler declined to give an actual number of Leek United Gold Cards issued, but said they were a "reasonable" proportion of the society's 75,000 members.

Overshadowing the epic commercial tussle between Leek United and American Express is the more significant question of whether gold cards, once the preserve of an exclusive elite, are now the vulgar playthings of a far wider segment of the population.

An American Express spokeswoman yesterday denied any such suggestion: "Our research shows that holding a gold card is rated on a par with owning a sports car or over and above having a fax machine or even going on a skiing holiday.

"Only one in 10 people have a gold card even today and you will find that these people still see them as aspirational things to have."

The card company's seeming reluctance to enter the gold market was based on the fact

that although Amex is famous for its charge cards - where you must settle your bill each month - it only launched its first standard credit card two years ago.

However, the spokeswoman added: "What people are looking for is the right brand. When people were asked what card is associated with gold, they immediately said American Express."

Richard Spencer, manager of the plastic cards department at

Datamonitor, the research company, said: "Over the last few years, the market for gold cards has changed from a high prestige upper-class thing to something aimed simply at higher spenders. Some people may

feel that there has been a bit of tarnishing of the exclusivity tag. But the card issuers themselves, who stand to make a lot of money from gold cards, won't really care."

Seekers of the ultimate cred-

it card to impress friends and family may not feel the same way. The new metal to aim for - you got it here first - is platinum.

Going for Gold -

The Long Weekend, p21

Big spender: Once the preserve of an exclusive élite, there are now more than 20 issuers of gold cards

Photograph: John Lawrence

OVERLEAF: A gold card from the Leek United Building Society

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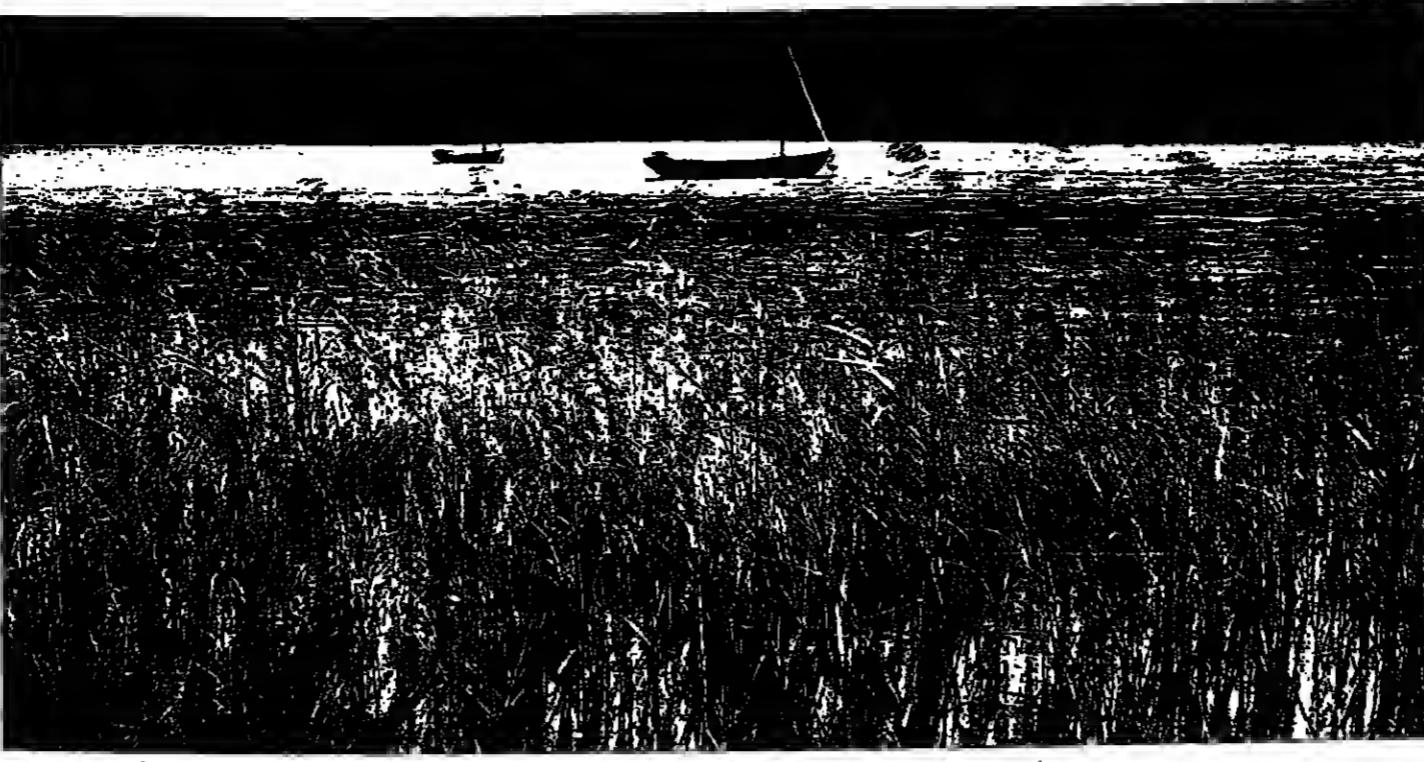
The lady, the lake, and a tale out of Chandler

Kim Songupta

A woman's body in a baby doll nightie found 70 feet underwater, a killer who thought for 21 years he had got away with it, and a detective who promised to hunt him down using the

sources of modern forensic technology. These were the extraordinary elements in the launch of a murder investigation in the Lake District yesterday.

Police confirmed that the body discovered by divers in Coniston Water was that of



Carol Park, a 30-year-old teacher, who vanished from her home in July 1976.

Last night officers were searching the home of Mrs Park's then-husband, Gordon, in Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria. Earlier in the day officers had

seized a boat belonging to Mr Park, a retired teacher, which was moored on Coniston Water. The last time the mother-of-three was seen alive was by her husband at their bungalow in Lees, Barrow-in-Furness – 15 miles from where the body had

been wrapped and tightly bound in sacking and bin-liners and weighted down with metal pieces – was eventually found. The couple had been due to take their children to Blackpool for the day, but Mrs Park remained behind saying she was ill.

Detective Superintendent Ian Douglas, of Cumbria police, said he would be interviewing members of the dead woman's family as part of a murder inquiry. This would include 53-year-old Mr Park, who is on a cycling holiday in France with

his third wife, Jenny, and may not be aware of the discovery.

Det Supt Douglas stated Mrs Park's death was being treated as murder because of the circumstances in which her body was found, although the cause of death had not yet been established. He continued: "We are on the trail of whoever did this. Twenty-one years ago I am quite sure he or she thought they were safe. They are not. I am quite confident we will eventually arrest someone for this. It is a long and complicated inquiry and will be for quite some time. We will certainly speak to Mr Park, as we will speak to any other member of the family as and when we get the chance to do so."

The body had been identified from dental records. Its condition indicated that it had been in the water for at least 15 years. Forensic specialists believe decomposition may have been slowed because of the low-water temperature and because of the wrapping.

Police yesterday started forensic examination of the Park's home. Last night a Cumbrian police spokeswoman said scenes of crime officers were searching the boat and the house, having executed simultaneous search warrants.

The spokeswoman said that the search warrants had been obtained from Barrow magistrates yesterday morning and added that "all lines of inquiry will now be pursued".

Detectives are also expected to try and trace another boat, the *Sail Fish*, which Mr Park owned at the time of his wife's disappearance but sold several years ago.

Det Supt Douglas said: "It isn't too late. There have been vast advances in forensic science in the past 20 years."



The

Vince Powells
the UK's best
music critic
Now he writes
the world

Alexander Walker

index

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UP TO 5

The life and times of a Mean Fiddler: from junk dealer to the stock market

Vince Power is the UK's biggest music promoter. Now he wants to float his empire on the stock market

Alexandra Williams

London's king of rock'n'roll is aiming to be the king of stocks and shares.

He looked like any other middle-aged festival-goer at the Reading Festival yesterday, but Vince Power, head of the Mean Fiddler organisation, was commanding operations, and he managed to slip in a quick announcement of a plan to float his empire on the stock market.

The portly Irishman, whose company is the UK's biggest promoter of live music, is planning to expand overseas and is looking to the stock market to raise capital.

"We've just finalised our plan to float on the market in the hope of raising some capital to expand quicker. The Mean Fiddler has been expanding at maybe a rate of three, four places a year but we have such a good brand now we want to expand more quickly."

"We need to go to the market with what we've got – hopefully by November," he said.

Power is the capital's undisputed king of rock'n'roll, owning a third of the city's major rock and jazz venues. He was responsible for luring the Sex Pistols out of retirement last year and plonking them in Finsbury Park to the delight of 30,000 ageing punk rockers. At the other end of musical spectrum, he has promoted Van Morrison and Roy Orbison.

He stages four of the six big summer festivals and in June launched the American version of his Fleadh Irish music bash.

In 1989, Power rescued the Reading Festival from bankruptcy and made it profitable, turning it into the most important festival after Glastonbury. Yesterday, the first day of the three-day festival, more than 45,000 people converged on Reading. The economic benefits of



Taking charge: Vince Power at Reading yesterday and (below) two of the artists he has promoted over the years, Van Morrison and Roy Orbison. Main photograph: Andrew Buurman



the festival for the town run into six figures. Festivals are a lucrative part of Power's business too, providing nearly half Mean Fiddler's pre-tax profits of £411,383 and £15m turnover in the 18 months to 31 December 1995. Last year there was a turnover of £25m.

The main band headlining the festival last night was the five-man group Suede, who have just released the single "Film Star".

The line-up for the weekend includes Cast, James, Knebworth, Manic Street Preachers, The Eels, Metallica and The Verve. And Reading's home-grown bands are also well represented. Bennett, who charmed with "Mum Has Gone To Iceland",

take to the stage on Sunday.

Born in 1947 in Waterford in Ireland, Power moved to Hemel Hempstead when he was 17 and began building up a second-hand furniture business in north

London. He started his first venue, Harlesden's Mean Fiddler, as a hobby in 1982.

"I snapped up a property in Harlesden for £125,000 and turned it into a Nashville-style

venue with cool beer and hot

music," he said.

"I was into country and Irish traditional music but it hadn't enough pulling power so I booked The Pogues, Los Lobos,

Lone Justice etcetera. And it worked. In 1988, I got involved in the Reading Festival. I checked out similar events in Europe, staged indie music and it was an instant hit."

A far cry from his days as a furniture dealer – or not?

"If you book the right band, you won't have much trouble getting the customers in. And if you chose the right furniture, you won't have much problem selling it. There are similarities," he said.

He plans to float the company, which is expected to run Fleadhs in New York, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, Toronto and Melbourne next year, in order to escalate the expansion.

"I started off as a one-man band but I think I need some help now. I think it's a new era for the Mean Fiddler – it's a new time and I think, in the long term, it will be very good for us," he said.

Life for rapist who struck again

Louise Jury

A rapist who attacked a young teacher only three months after being freed from a 14-year prison sentence for another sex offence was sentenced to life yesterday as probation officers revealed that they knew he would strike again.

Christopher Clark, 46, pounced on the woman, placed a plastic bag over her head and indecently assaulted her yards from a bail hostel in Bath where he was being held on probation.

As Clark began his life sentence, probation officers said they had been "waiting for something to happen" as soon as he was freed after serving nine years of the 14-year term.

But they were helpless to prevent his release because his original sentence for rape was handed down before the 1991 Criminal Justice Act made it possible to keep offenders inside if they are still considered a risk to society.

Members of Clark's family revealed that they had pleaded with the authorities to prevent his release. And Don Foster, the Liberal Democrat MP for Bath, said the law should be tightened to prevent other dangerous offenders sentenced before 1991 being released.

Gary Redfern, Avon Probation Service's assistant chief officer, said: "There was nothing we could do and we were simply waiting for something to happen – we considered him to be dangerous. His offending had not been addressed and he had not changed. We knew Christopher Clark as a risk."

Mr Redfern defended the service which he said had been unfairly criticised in the case. Clark was considered too dangerous to be released on parole, but, under the rules operating at the time, was entitled to remission. He had been ordered to take the drug Goserelin to destroy his sex drive.

Clark, who was nicknamed the "early bird rapist" following a string of knife-point sex attacks on women in the 1980s, had denied attacking the 23-year-old teacher.

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MAGNUM

Blairs look a gift horse in the mouth after lunch with Lionel

Joanna Lee
Paris

Europe's two newest left-wing leaders had lunch together yesterday in the village of Saint Martin d'Oydes, in the beautiful Ariège region in south-west France. Tony Blair has been on holiday there with his family and the French Prime Minister, Lionel Jospin, who was visiting his constituency of Cintegabelle, 20 miles away, drove over for lunch with his wife, Cherie.

The atmosphere was casual. Mr Blair, who has received a royal welcome here since his arrival, looked relaxed in his holiday attire of a shirt and summer trousers. Neither man wore a tie as they strolled through the village, swamped by journalists and television cameras. Most of the 200 inhabitants of the village were also there to welcome them.

The leaders had a glass of champagne with the proud and elated mayor in the village square, where the villagers presented Mr Blair's three children with a young pony called Justin.

However, the children will not be bringing the pony - of the Pyrenees Mérinos breed - home with them. A Downing Street spokesman said: 'The gift was very much appreciated, but the Blairs will leave the horse with a local family who also have children who are able to ride it.'

He was unable to say whether the animal was given to the French family to keep or for safekeeping until the Blairs are

able to visit it again. It is thought the Blairs may have been concerned about finding adequate stabling for it in the Downing Street area.

As they walked back to the Blair holiday home for lunch, they discussed in French Mr Jospin's budget for 1998. Speaking to journalists, Mr Jospin commented on Mr Blair's youth, and the leaders said that Europe was on the lunch menu "along with some relaxing chat".

Officials at Mr Jospin's office

have been keen to underline the private nature of the lunch. A spokesman from the Matignon said: "We have no idea what the two men will discuss."

However relaxed the meeting was, it is the first time the two leaders have met on a one-to-one basis and both were keen to

what common ground they

have, particularly on Europe.

It is likely that the French leader will have tried to gain the support of his British counterpart in jobs in Europe, which will be discussed at the EU employment summit in November. Mr Jospin lobbied for this summit at the intergovernmental conference in Amsterdam in June, emphasising the importance of a "social Europe" and rejecting an EU based solely on economic issues.

Social concerns in Europe have not dampened the French government's enthusiasm for the single currency and Mr Jospin will have been keen to find out exactly where the

The pony was much appreciated, but it will be left with a local family's children'



Horse play: Tony and Cherie Blair with Justin, a local Pyrenees pony, a gift from the people of Saint Martin d'Oydes, where the family are holidaying. The Prime Minister met his French counterpart, Lionel Jospin, for an informal lunch yesterday

Photograph: AP

Military warn over Bosnian Serb split

Christopher Bellamy
Defence Correspondent

Bosnian Serb President Biljana Plavšić has won the first round of her battle with supporters of Radovan Karadžić, but she has a hard struggle ahead which could still split the Bosnian Serb mini-state in two, geographically as well as politically.

Yesterday, the Bosnian Serb military staff based in Bijeljina

warned Ms Plavšić that it would move against her to prevent the *Republika Srpska* splitting in two.

Ms Plavšić yesterday ap-

peared to have wrested control

of the Banja Luka police from

officers loyal to Mr Karadžić and

the UN has started re-training

Bosnian Serb policemen in Banja Luka to create a "non-

political" police force as part of

efforts to defuse conflict within

the Serb community and to con-

solidate a peaceful, democratic

society. But the Bosnian Serb

military remains an obstacle.

The *Republika Srpska* com-

prises two lobes connected by

the narrow Bosnian corridor running north to the north-

The political situation reflects the geographically Banja Luka, a

large city in the north-west, is

one of two main power centres in the Serb "entity" within

Bosnia. The other is in the east

in the official capital, the for-

mer Serb town of Sarajevo.

Banja Luka is Ms Plavšić's pow-

er base, and its politics have tra-

ditionally been more moderate

in contrast to Pale, where Mon-

cilo Krstić, the Serb repre-

sentative on the three-man

Bosnian presidency. Mr Karadžić and General Ratko

Mladić are based.

A civil war between Serbs

would probably split the Bosnian

Serbs on those lines, weak-

ening it, inviting the Mus-

lims to push north through the

Posavina corridor - which was

almost cut during the 1992-95

civil war - making it easier for

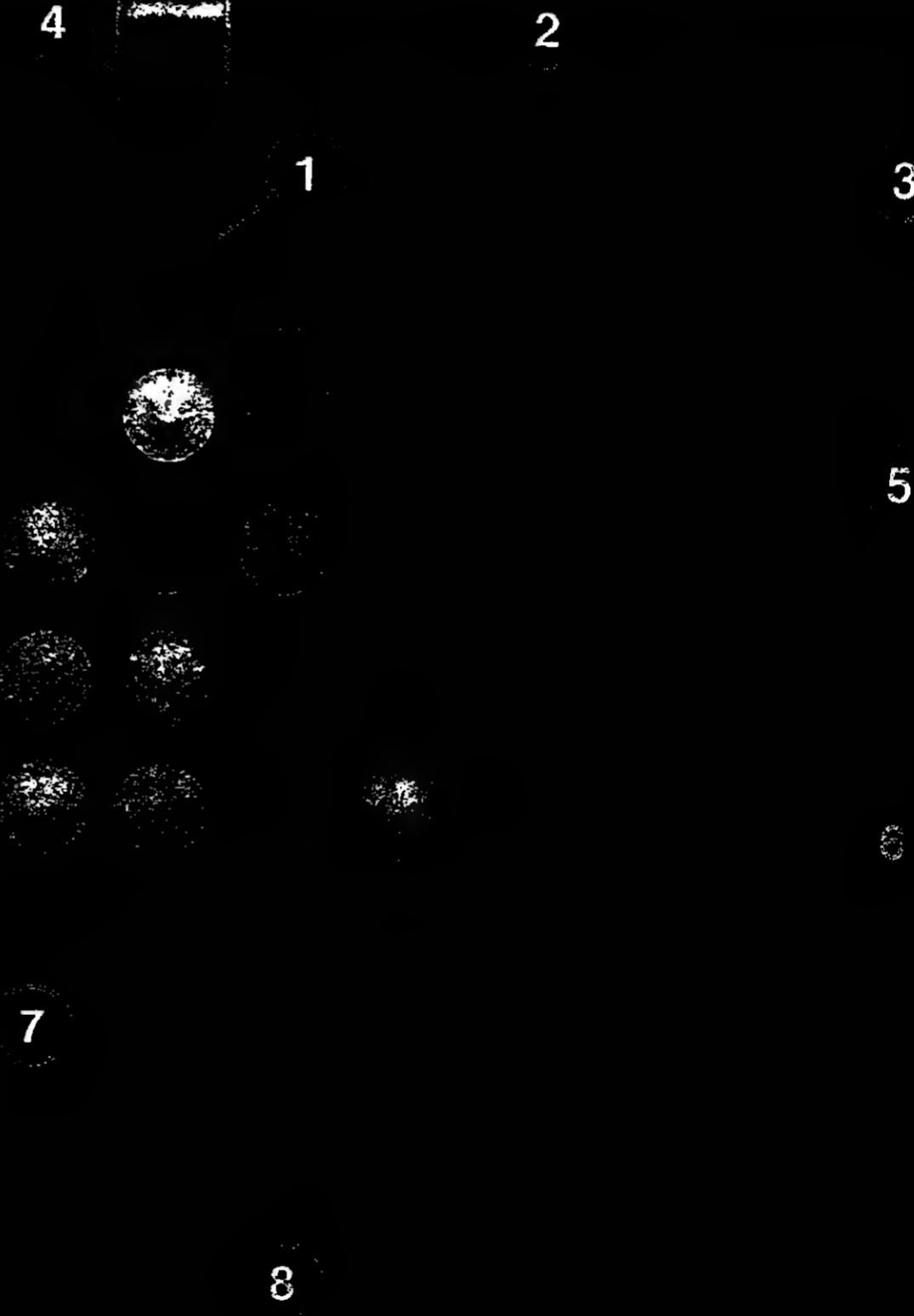
Muslim and Croat refugees to

return home and for Nato

to bomb and for

the Serb military, its position look-

increasingly desperate.



Disney celebrates first birthday of town they built out of the American dream

Celebration, Florida

It nestles by a blue lagoon, its classically styled clapboard houses glistening in the blinding sun. Its pristine main street, lined with small shops, begins at the colonnaded town hall and ends in a bower at the water's edge.

There are neat village streets that curve and weave, defying the standard grid pattern, and a garden square or two. The brand-new school is not – like most new schools – stranded way outside town. There are woods and grass and even pavements that lead somewhere. Everyone is linked by a town-wide "intranet" and, of course, there is a golf course.

But for any American with intellectual pretensions and for any European with half a sense of history, there is only one politically correct response to this small town in the central Florida marshes. It is "Ugh!"

To its detractors, Celebration commits two cardinal sins simply by being there: it is a completely artificial construct and it is a product of the ever-spreading Disney Company. But for the several dozen couples and families who visit the town each day with a view to settling here, these are its charms.

Strange though this may seem in Europe, much of Middle America associates Disney not with kitsch and commercialisation, but with "quality" and "family values". It guarantees a traditional sort of safety; you can rely on it.

And what these Americans (like the late Walt Disney before them) hanker after is the small town of imagined childhood memory: a town with a centre, with walkable streets and houses that look as houses ought to look; a town where you feel safe enough to leave your front door unlocked, let your children walk to school, and lend your neighbour a cup of sugar.

Small matter that, as sophisticates say dismissively, such a town never existed, except perhaps in the pictures of Norman Rockwell (another object of their scorn). The message of Celebration, joyously received by aspiring townspersons, is that even if it did not exist, it could – and would – have been invented. Now, a year after the first residents moved in, Celebration is, depending on your point of view, a town of 1,200 souls, or no soul at all.

Some have dubbed it a "company town" and drawn parallels with the forward-looking settlements built by paternalistic employers for their workers – like Port Sunlight near Liverpool. But Celebration is not a charitable endeavour, nor is it paternalistic, and it is not populated by Disney employees.

Celebration was devised and planned by a specially formed subsidiary of the Disney Company on Disney-owned land



But intellectuals snub gleaming experiment with reality, reports Mary Dejevsky

just south of the theme park with twin aims: to meet a perceived demand for a town like this, and to see whether Walt Disney's original idea for Epcot (the experimental prototype community of tomorrow which became just another theme park) could work for real. "Experimental prototype community of yesteryear", scoff critics – even though demand has exceeded supply.

There are no qualifications for living there, the Celebration Company insists, but you have to demonstrate your commitment by buying or building a house there, and then living in it at least nine months of the year. The prices alone operate as a sort of selection: starting around \$160,000 (£100,000) for more modest houses, they are very high compared with prices locally. The architectural constraints are another bar: only certain styles and features are permitted so as to maintain the "integrity" of the whole. "Mickey Mouse town", say the critics.

A year on, people are still buying. Most houses are occupied and term at the school has just begun. The next development phase has been accelerated and a massive hospital and recreation complex is scheduled to open early.

Despite all this activity, the streets by day seem strangely empty and the report card on the town's first year is mixed. Enthusiasts talk about friendliness, safety and civilisation. Critics talk of sanitised living and wonder whether a "community" can be built so easily.

A few of the bigger mansions are back on the market. A number of families became disillusioned with the experimental school curriculum and the fact that the new building was not ready last year. They had expected a sound dose of the three Rs in a state-of-the-art building, and presumably straight A grades for their offspring.

The innate conservatism, in fact, seems to characterise Celebration better than its experimental aspect. For, despite its novel beginning, the town re-

sembles nothing so much as an upmarket white suburb of almost any United States city, with the houses just squashed up a little for a "suburban effect".

Its appeal is identical to that of such suburbs: its residents select themselves by income and aspiration. With its small-town arrangement and its small shops and cafes, it seems to offer the best of both worlds.

Last summer, as the first residents arrived, the chief questions raised by Celebration derived from its artificiality. Can a community be created from scratch? The company says that is up to the residents. Can, and should, a town be started and effectively governed by a corporation? The company replies that local democracy will grow. But will it, if the residents prefer to live as Disney-style customers rather than democratic participants?

A year on, however, Celebration poses another question. It is an extension of the question posed by the proliferation of exclusive and largely self-contained suburbs around major US cities. Should one section of the population be able to withdraw so completely as to be living in a separate world? And if not, how can that trend possibly be stopped?



Clean sheet: Celebration has picture-book buildings and walkable streets where residents feel safe, but no history yet. Photograph: Stuart Clarke

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Why Mir crew had to walk on wild side

Charles Arthur
Science Editor

The restoration of power to the Mir space station yesterday was a major step back to full operation – but the harder task may lie ahead of the three-man crew, who are having a well-earned rest this weekend from repair duties.

The biggest problem, which has yet to be tackled, will be to fix the hole in the Spektr module, caused on 25 June when a Progress supply ship crashed slowly but unstoppably into it.

Repairing that hole, which still renders Spektr unusable, will involve an outside space-walk and a patching job that has never actually been attempted on a working space-craft.

Fixing holes in spacecraft is not a task that anyone undertakes lightly: if the seal is not perfect then it could fail catastrophically, and cause a repeat of the desperate five-minute scramble to seal off the module that led to power cables being cut off last time.

Nor have there been any occasions when such a fix has been required. Previously, collisions in space have either been minor – such as an orbiting paint speck which dented but did not puncture a Space Shuttle window some years ago – or total, as happened last year when a telecommunications satellite abruptly stopped working – almost certainly due to being hit by “space junk”.

However, if the hole can be fixed, using a combination of high-tech glues and simple patching, then Spektr will come back into its own as the only permanent floating laboratory presently available in space. Companies and governments in the United States, Europe and Japan are all prepared for science experiments to be performed in the exceptional conditions of space.

That is an important money-earner for Russia. Although President Boris Yeltsin yesterday did not find it at once, which is why the external space-walk is necessary.



the faults so far

Feb 24 – Fire breaks out when cosmonauts try to change an air filter. The crew have to wear gas masks against fumes released during the incident.

March 6 – Cargo ship Progress fails to dock with Mir and is dumped.

March 7 – Generator providing oxygen fails, forcing the crew to use backup chemical system.

April 4 – Leak develops in cooling system, temporarily knocking out a device used to maintain breathable air on board.

June 25 – Another Progress cargo craft hits Mir during practice docking, puncturing Spektr module and damaging solar batteries. July 3 – Navigation devices to keep solar energy panels lined up to the sun fail. Adjusted by next day.

July 5 – Cosmonauts report they hear thumps and see something leaking overboard from the damaged module. Officials say they do not know what leaked but insist it was not fuel.

Jul 17 – Crew member mistakenly cuts out a vital computer cable, prompting massive power failure.

August 7 – Failure in automatic docking system forces astronauts to go to manual docking at last minute.

August 14 – Booster rocket which should ease landing of Soyuz capsule bringing cosmonauts back to Earth fails, giving them a rough landing but no injuries.

August 17 – Mir suddenly cancels docking with supply ship after computer programming error.

August 18 – Main computer fails, sending Mir spinning in deorbitation for the third time since June. Computer is repaired and orientation re-established in day.

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GRAPHIC: KRISTINA FERRIS

significant shorts

Two killed in Kenyan church shooting

Gunmen shot and killed two displaced Kenyans in a raid on a church compound south of the Indian Ocean city of Mombasa yesterday, taking the toll from 10 days of ethnic attacks in the region to 42 people dead. On a positive note for Kenya, International Monetary Fund officials said a delegation would arrive in Nairobi on Monday to discuss with President Daniel arap Moi a date for resuming negotiations on a \$205m aid package halted last month. The President arrived in Mombasa by helicopter yesterday on his first visit to the coast since the start of the violence.

Reuters – LONDON

Tutsis massacred in camp

At least 107 refugees were killed and 30 wounded in an attack on a camp housing Tutsis from former Zaire in Rwanda's northwestern border region of Gisenyi. United Nations spokeswoman Pamela O'Toole said preliminary reports indicated that the ethnic Tutsis, who fled fighting in the Masisi region in eastern Zaire, were massacred with machetes by unidentified attackers late on Thursday night. Rwandan government officials put the death toll higher at 120, including local civilians.

Reuters – Geneva

Erbakan chats with Le Pen

Turkey's Islamist leader Necmettin Erbakan and France's far-right Jean-Marie Le Pen held an unlikely meeting at a Turkish seaside retreat. The *Milliye* newspaper said they held six hours of talks on Thursday in a hotel in Altinuk on the Aegean, where former prime minister Erbakan regularly takes breaks. “A meeting of opposites took place. Our leader made recommendations to Le Pen and told him about Turkey,” Welfare Party MP Mehmet Ali Sahin said.

Reuters – Ankara

Rome punishes injury to dragon

An Italian court sentenced a man to three months in jail for damaging a fountain and ordered him to pay the costs of restoring Rome's 17th-century Bernini sculpture. Sebastiano Intili, who snapped off the tail of a dragon in the fountain in the Piazza Navona, was also ordered to pay legal costs of some £2m (£2695). Intili's lawyer said his client would file counter-charges, demanding that the city council pay him £300m (£104,250). – Reuters – Rome

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A happy summer for the health police

Bank holidays, as any city dweller knows, are best spent at home. Streets are deserted, supermarket queues are short and a delicious quiet descends as the neighbours head for the country and the beach. Now doctors have offered an extra reason for eschewing the sybaritic delights of Clacton or Clliford. Going away can be bad for the heart.

Hours spent in a hot tin can jammed in a line of hot tin cans, diesel fumes mingling with the aroma of marmite sandwiches and bruised bananas while fractious kids demand "Are we there, yet?" from the back ought to make any one ill. Now the British Heart Foundation has unnecessarily warned that the combination of travel, hot weather and air pollution can spell danger for those "intent on fun". Amazing.

It has been a bumper summer for the health police. We have had warnings about the sun, the air, and the sea, about impurities in drinking water, *E. coli* 0157 and nerve damage caused by vitamins (B6). But outdoing all these have been warnings about the heart.

Within the space of six weeks, at least half a dozen theories about the causes of heart disease and heart attacks have been offered by scientists. The proliferation of theories and estimates of risk leave the average reader floundering, wondering whether to change jobs, spouse, diet or holiday plans. Scientifically, there may be nothing to fault. But in public health terms it is a disaster. Any bar-room

medic trying to assess the competing arguments can only conclude that doctors are as ignorant as the rest of us – and mine's a pint, a greasy bacon sandwich and a packet of 20 please, guv.

A striking example of the difficulties the public face occurred last month. On 23 July, the National Heart Forum called a press conference to highlight Britain's poor record on heart disease measured against comparable countries and to reinforce the message on diet, exercise and smoking. These three, the experts said, accounted for most of the variation in heart disease rates and there was no other factor, either known or likely to be discovered, that had an impact of a similar magnitude on the risk.

The following day, a paper in *The Lancet*, the latest in a series to emerge from a 20-year examination of 10,000 civil servants known as the Whitehall study, showed bosses who have control over their work are less likely to suffer heart attacks than workers who don't. Those on the top floor were healthier than those on the shop floor and it was the degree of participation in decisions that accounted for most of the difference.

Reconciling these two views of the causes of heart disease demands an appreciation of relative risk. Comparing overfed, understressed (in a physical sense) Westerners with their lean, active cousins in the developing world leaves no doubt about the importance of the traditional risk factors of diet, exercise and smoking.



ing. But within Western nations, differences persist between groups. When comparing British executives with British clerks, job control appears to account for almost half the variation of heart attack risk – but that is a small difference compared to the benefit (in heart disease terms) of being born in, say, Uganda.

That is only the start of the confusion. This week, researchers reported that submissive women have one third of the risk of suffering an attack compared with those who are more assertive. Earlier research has shown that aggressive, ambitious Type A personalities are more prone to attacks than relaxed Type B ones. Next week a new study will suggest that men who give blood reduce their risk by depleting their iron stores – in the same way that women do naturally through menstruation. Red wine, what your mother ate during pregnancy, and infection have also been implicated.

So, where does that leave us? Meek, non-smoking blood donors who run their own lives, eat up their greens and cycle to work shall live long enough to inherit the earth – while the rest of us enjoy life, ignore the health advice, and die young.

Science offers no simple answers. We have to learn to live with uncertainty and accept that scientific understanding proceeds like football – with much, apparently purposeless, running around punctuated by occasional flashes of brilliance that move the game forward.

The drawback is that this leaves openings for those who wish to exploit the uncertainty for their own commercial advantage. Yesterday, David Bacon, head of corporate communication at British American Tobacco, sought to muddy the clear message on smoking delivered a day earlier by Geoffrey Bible, the chairman and chief executive of the US tobacco giant Philip Morris, that cigarettes "might have" killed 100,000 Americans.

In a piece of sophistry of the sort we have come to expect from the tobacco industry, Mr Bacon sought to represent this historic admission as no more than an observation about the statistical link between smoking and lung cancer. He claimed the disease's biological cause had "still to be established".

Technically he may be right, but morally his position is bankrupt. There can be no doubt about the lethal nature of cigarettes yet this message is still being fudged three decades after it became a certainty.

On the major issues of public health – smoking, heart disease, cancer – where there is a measure of agreement, we need scientists to sign up to the basic thesis rather than squabbling over the finer points. Scientific accuracy demands an assessment both of the strength of the evidence and of the power of the conclusion. Facts are not sacred, they require interpretation.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Devolution is best for Scotland and Westminster

Sir: The three letters printed today (20 August) demonstrate a lack of understanding of devolution. First, it does not duplicate effort. Over two centuries the demands upon our system of government have increased enormously, with the addition of myriad responsibilities. The UK Parliament does not have time to debate important issues in sufficient detail. As many big businesses have done, it makes sense to do things efficiently by devolving responsibility to the component parts, allowing them to consider their needs in detail and at the same time freeing up Westminster to focus on UK issues in sufficient detail.

Secondly, proportional representation will help prevent corruption, unlike the first past the post system that has encouraged corruption at both local and national level. It is highly unlikely that any party, let alone a clique, will gain a majority in the Scottish Parliament, as they would need to gain more than 50 per cent of the vote to do so. Instead parties will have to co-operate with each other, agreeing no policies which are thus likely to be in tune with the wishes of the majority of the electorate.

Thirdly, there are few areas where disputes between the UK and Scottish Parliaments can develop, as their respective areas of responsibility will be clearly delineated. In the event that there are disagreements, comprehensive mechanisms are proposed in the

White Paper for addressing these in talks between the Cabinet and the Scottish Executive. Ultimately, any dispute can be referred to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.

In any case, it is better that there are occasional disputes between two elected Parliaments than the feelings of deep resentment that developed in Scotland while subjected to 18 years of Conservative rule. For a nation that consistently elected a majority of non-Tory MPs it was galling to be subjected to Thatcherite experiments like the poll tax. The depth of that resentment was demonstrated on the 1 May when no Tories were elected in Scotland at all.

SAM GHIBALAN
Press Officer
Scotland Forward
Edinburgh

Sir: The argument about whether or not a referendum should be held before or after the Devolution Act is passed through Parliament misses the point. (Sheena McDonald, "Labour's slippery offering to the people of Scotland", 22 August).

Tam Dalyell MP may believe that the devil lies in the detail but I doubt whether the average voter is going to base their final decision on what the Act will have to say on savings and investments, personal pensions and annuity schemes etc, or on what the majority of the electorate.

Thirdly, there are few areas where disputes between the UK and Scottish Parliaments can develop, as their respective areas of responsibility will be clearly delineated. In the event that there are disagreements, comprehensive mechanisms are proposed in the

referendum vote should be based upon a consideration of basic constitutional principles.

Do the Scottish people want Scottish affairs to be governed by representatives directly accountable for their work, or do they trust British MPs to do the job for them? Furthermore, are Scottish people willing to take genuine responsibility for their own affairs, ie to put their money where their mouth is? That is the broad gist of the proposals, and as such is clearly outlined by the White Paper and the Labour manifesto.

These are the questions which the referendum should address, meanwhile Parliament, if it is designed for any purpose at all, is there to scrutinise the detail. That function will be better able to perform once the basic principles have been accepted by the Scottish people. One need only recall the filibustering which accompanied the 1978-9 legislation to realise the common sense behind the present government's approach.

But just in case Sheena McDonald is correct and the voter really is about to rest their decision on the precise detail of the Devolution Act, might I suggest that we are truly democratic and have not two questions on the referendum paper but one question for every clause of the Act.

RICHARD KIRKHAM
Sheffield

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Thirdly, there are few areas

Cars, trams and trolleybuses

Sir: One city that has, proportionally, similar problems to London is Prague ("Who needs a second car?", 22 August). Built on lines completely incompatible with the motor car, and filled with both a large tourist and indigenous population, it can show Innn Prescott (a subsidised) solution that works.

As a regular visitor, I never attempt to use my car in the city. Parking is severely restricted to residents and where there are car parks, they are comparatively expensive. The alternatives are cheap and plentiful, but their prime attraction is their reliability.

Trams have priority over all other traffic. Buses run exactly on time – again due to their priority over other vehicles. The Metro runs on time and has surroundings both pleasant and functional.

A ticket costs 10 crowns (20p) and lasts for one hour after being stamped at the start of a journey. Mixing forms of travel during that hour is unrestricted.

Mussolini may have made the trains run in time, but Mr Prescott should look to Havel for his model for a transport solution, for London at least.

M. GODDARD
London SW1

Sir: Stephen Cromie (letter, 18 August) perpetuates the myth that "motorists" are on the road by choice, and have an option to use public transport.

For most motorists not the M25, for example, there is no practical public transport option, because the rail infrastructure in and around London is designed to carry people to and from the centre, not from suburb to suburb. Since many businesses have moved out from the centre to these very suburbs, their staffs have to commute from suburb to suburb.

Instead of widening the M25, expenditure on a parallel "ring rail" connecting the outer London suburbs, the radial rail services and Heathrow would be far more beneficial.

KEN HALE
Uckfield, Sussex

Sir: There is a better solution to urban chaos than the tramcar. For silent, speedy operation in town centres the trolleybus beats the tramcar any day. On holiday recently I was glad to see that this vehicle still exists in Belgium and Austria. I saw examples in daily use in Ghent, Innsbruck and Salzburg. I rode on an articulated trolleybus

from a hotel on the outskirts to the centre of Salzburg.

It had good acceleration, good bus-type accommodation, and being unconstrained by tracks, was able to move to the side of the road for easy access. Its rubber tyres made for noise-free comfort. In 1952 London had the highest concentration of trolleybuses in the world. Some were even built during World War II to reduce consumption of precious imported fuel in favour of home-produced coal. Some double-deckers had a maximum capacity of 54 passengers. The only disadvantage was that two overhead wires were needed, but this was counterbalanced by the fact that trolleybuses run on ordinary roads, with no track laying or maintenance.

D. L. SMITH
Daventry, Northamptonshire

Sir: In the laudable discussion about fewer cars, a cleaner environment, and better public transport, no one appears to have considered what is far more a major problem, namely *how do you get the shopping home?* Our mothers and grandmothers, many of them full-time housewives, needed to shop several times a week in order to ensure fresh food and many shops at that time made regular home deliveries.

It is quite impractical to expect today's working parents, who get to a supermarket once a week after work, and often with small children in tow, to lug a full trolley's worth of groceries home no bus or train. Unless this problem is addressed, the second car will be here to stay.

MARY MACRAE-GIBSON
Burton, Norfolk

Sir: Ministers are considering a ban on local, non-commercial traffic from the M6, giving more space for long-distance heavy-goods vehicles. I can see a vision, on M6 with loads of room for nose-to-tail trucks – hang on, it looks a bit like the mainline train that does almost the same journey each day.

MARTIN WAYNESS
Windermere, Cumbria

Sir: Has anyone mentioned car insurers as a way of controlling traffic? My son, who lives in Vancouver, Canada, travels to work daily on the bus as there is a reduced rate of car insurance on cars which are not taken into town by commuters during the week.

F. DAY
Woodlambton, Preston

Loss of TV archive programmes

Sir: Whilst the wiping of *Not Only ... But Also* may be undesirable ("BBC recorded local news over classic Pete 'n' Dud", 21 August), it uses questionable logic to reach the conclusion that news coverage which replaced it is of lesser value.

News items are often unique, and totally irreplaceable. *Dud* and *Pete* at least had a selection of their output preserved, and scripts are surely available for either material.

Furthermore, the fact that clearances from the archive concentrated on light entertainment and drama, leaving ows coverage behind, owes much to the short-sighted behaviour by the likes of Equity on behalf of their artists. The union limited repeats of older material in favour of new productions.

Once overseas sales had been exhausted by the BBC, and with little chance if it being re-screened, much material became unusable and archiving a drain on the licence payer's money.

Utilising the space for news makes commercial sense under the circumstances.

HAD EQUITY undertaken to finance the archiving of the material in conjunction with the BBC, older programmes might still have been used.

Only the unforeseen development of domestic-video revealed that this material had further commercial exploitation potential, by which time it was too late.

SIMON DOYLE
London NW3

Sir: Comedy producer Harry Thompson describes as "cultural vandalism" the loss of episodes

from the Sixties Peter Cook and Dudley Moore series *Not Only ... But Also* (report, 21 August).

But was keeping local news really given any greater priority? I understand that when BBC Manchester moved to their new headquarters on Oxford Road in the Seventies, their local news library was taken in by the North-West Film Archive at Manchester Polytechnic.

Are programmes being preserved as well as they could be today? I first became alarmed about these disappearing programmes in 1980. Since then, I have built up a collection of off-air recordings on VHS. A couple of years ago, when I heard a story that episodes from the first series of *Blackadder* had been destroyed, I contacted the BBC Film and Television Library.

They denied that any of this series was missing. I mentioned some of the other recordings that I have. When I asked about the *Carla Lane* comedy *Butterflies*, the reply was "yes, I think we have lost most of those". I asked if the library would like a list of my material and was told I could send one if I wanted, but not to go to any trouble.

VHS may not be broadcast quality, but surely it is better than nothing. And those Australian *Stepnie and Son* recordings that BBC screened were hardly good quality.

As your article points out, we do

see to see the same old, limited range of clips from a number of series. It is high time that more was done to safeguard our TV heritage.

GEOFF STAFFORD
Belford, Northumberland

Good GPs need communication skills

Sir: I despair that a fellow member of the profession with the seniority of John Adams (Letters, 22 August) should equate high grades at A-level with skilled, empathetic GPs.

There is no evidence that those who do best at A-level achieve more than those with lower grades at either second year (2nd MB) or final exams. What we need, as Jeremy Lawrence suggested ("Doctor, doctor, you're not on my wavelength", 20 August), is an effective dual system which puts weight on the ability of applicants to work together in teams and to communicate.

This would require some effort

QUOTE UNQUOTE

I feel like the roots of a great bunch of flowers. The grower gets the praise, the flowers get the admiration, while the roots that started it all must remain under the ground unnoticed – Thomas Gallagher, father of the Oasis brothers Liam and Noel

It was like a slowly spreading pool of blood seeping out from under a locked door – Patrick Jephcott, former private secretary to Diana, Princess of Wales, on life at Kensington Palace during his seven years there

Laura Ashley did not accept that women wanted to be liberated from the home. Her anti-fashion stand led her to declare that the clothes she designed should be comfortable enough to enable a mother to bend down and pick up toys – Anne Sebba, Laura Ashley's biographer

We simply can't give roasted swans to the public this season – Derek Deane, artistic director of English National Ballet, who has ordered dancers not to sunbathe ahead of their production of *Swan Lake*'

When David Jenkins, the former Bishop of Durham, retired he left a vacancy in the cast list of our national life for a barny bishop. I was passing the theatre door at the time and before I knew it, I was on stage auditioning for the role. I seem to have landed the job – Dr Richard Holloway, Bishop of Edinburgh

You know what his name is? He's called Peter. Do you think you will get no executive, Peter? – John Prescott, Deputy Prime Minister, holding up a crab and mocking Peter Mandelson's bid to win a place on Labour's National Executive Committee

Britain's policy towards its dependents used to be dignified

Sir: Your leader ("Dereliction of duty in the shadow of a volcano", 21 August) rightly points out the shame of the 1981 British Nationality Act, which stripped thousands of British citizens in dependent territories of the right of abode in the UK.

Contrary to accepted wisdom, cricket in the UK is a sport which is truly enjoyed by only a small minority but which gets far more

residents of the island of St Helena, and its dependent islands. When one of these islands, Tristan da Cunha, suffered its own volcanic eruption in 1961, the islanders were evacuated 6,000 miles to the UK until the island was safe to re-inhabit. In those days – when Britain had a more

the saturday story

The little people of Paisley

The scandal in the west of Scotland has caught the nation's attention, but it's just a typical tale of small town corruption says Christian Wolmar

The councillors of Renfrewshire were on their best behaviour at their meeting on Thursday. There was no shouting or screaming and very few interruptions. This was unprecedented. The meetings in the Sixties council headquarters in Paisley are usually as brutal as the architecture of the building, with confrontations between Labour and the Scottish National Party, falling just short of the physical. The police have been called several times, not to deal with the public, but to control the councillors.

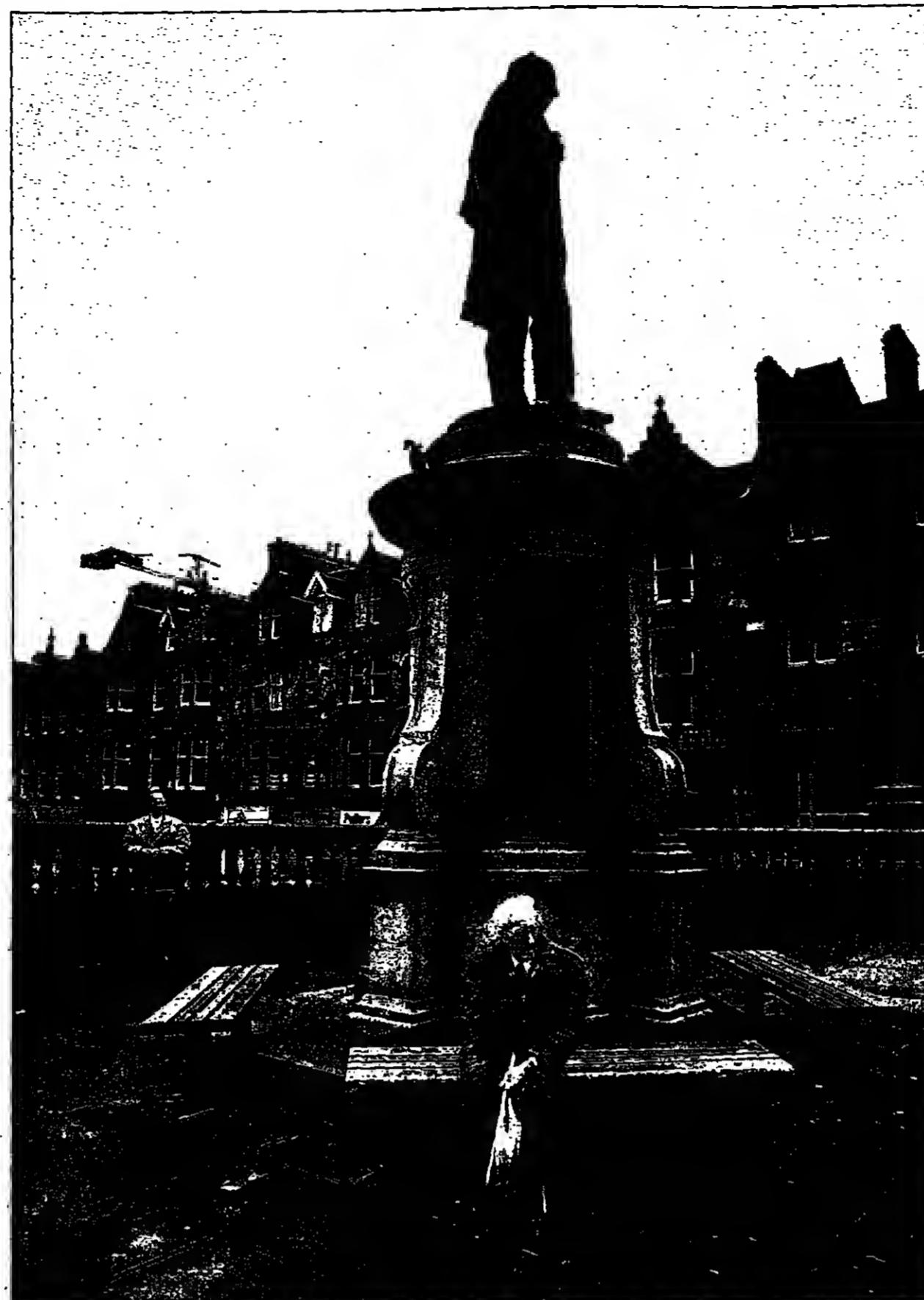
Conscious of the presence of a large contingent of journalists, the councillors managed to moderate their behaviour, but not their language. The SNP leader, Bruce McFee, a big man with weight problems, like many in this drama, was rather too pleased with his own inventiveness, ranting about the Labour Party's "nest of vipers" and its "cesspit" of politics. Labour were like an "authoritarian junta," according to his deputy, Jim Mitchell.

It was all over the top, and so is the whole Paisley politics affair. These are little people,

and this whole business is small beer, except that, by accident, it has attracted national attention and may well affect the devolution referendum taking place on 11 September. Looking at the councillors in action, it's clear that most wouldn't have the wit to indulge in major corruption schemes. "It's an August story," says Professor Alan Alexander, of Strathclyde University, a long-time observer of Scottish local politics, "made interesting by the immediacy of the referendum."

Even some of those involved admit that the Paisley affair is really about feuding personalities. "There's no big ideological argument here," says Paul Mack, a leading player. "Many in the SNP could be in the Labour Party, or the other way round." Mr Mack was suspended by the Labour Party. He then got himself re-elected as a councillor when the official Labour candidate mysteriously withdrew, the morning nominations were due. He recently defected to the SNP because

Many people say the internecine battles started in the day-to-day politics of the council in a sulk and attended few meetings until its re-formation as Renfrewshire, a



Local hero: a statue of Sir Peter Coats, of the thread company J&P Coats, in the heart of Paisley
Photograph: Tom Kidd

McMaster were elected for the seats. Others, such as Mr Mack, suggest that the real war began in 1992, when Nancy Allison, the present Provost (the north-of-the-Border equivalent of mayor), was stopped from becoming provost of the now-defunct Renfrew council at the last minute, by an alliance of the opposition and some Labour councillors.

Mrs Allison is still a powerful figure. Her little gang withdrew from the day-to-day politics of the council in a sulk and attended few meetings until its re-formation as Renfrewshire, a

more powerful council. Renfrewshire is controlled – just – by Labour. Several existing councillors found themselves dropped as candidates for the new authority, and the Allison faction took control.

The Allisons are allied to Irene Adams, MP for Paisley North, and united in their dislike of Tommy Graham who, when it looked as if either he, Adams or McMaster would lose their seats in boundary changes, promptly set up an office in Paisley, outside his constituency. This was also the time when, mysteriously, all the inhabitants of an old people's home found themselves unwittingly signed up as Labour party members. All these carpetbagging efforts proved unnecessary when the boundary commission retained

the existing number of parliamentary seats.

There are also the usual accusations of patronage and nepotism flying around Paisley, but it has already been much investigated, with little success. It started, as many such stories do, with good intentions. In the late Eighties Ferguslie Park, on the fringes of the town, was the worst area of Paisley, with a reputation for harbouring gangsters in its mean, three-storey tenements. FCB was set up to create jobs in the area: the council, along with the Scottish Office and the Strathclyde Region, sank £200,000 into the project. FCB thrived for a while, but it went bust last year, and £21,336 is still unaccounted for.

According to a liquidator's report leaked to the local Paisley

security firm FCB, were being investigated.

FCB is the one decent-sized potential scandal emerging in Paisley, but it has already been much investigated, with little success. It started, as many such stories do, with good intentions. In the late Eighties Ferguslie Park, on the fringes of the town, was the worst area of Paisley, with a reputation for harbouring gangsters in its mean, three-storey tenements. FCB was set up to create jobs in the area: the council, along with the Scottish Office and the Strathclyde Region, sank £200,000 into the project. FCB thrived for a while, but it went bust last year, and £21,336 is still unaccounted for.

According to a liquidator's report leaked to the local Paisley

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karen krizanovich

There's a woman back home who replies to the shop clerk's cheery "Have a nice day" with "Don't tell me what to do." This is a global right. If she wanted to buy the local church, remodel it and then proudly announce that she is installing a black bidet in her bathroom, then it is her inalienable right to do so – to be tasteless, in other words.

Style magazines and newspapers make like they know what's in and what's out. But as the Versace knock-knock joke goes ("Knock-Knock," "Who's there?" "Versace," "Versace who?"), fashion is at best a grace note – meant to be played and then forgotten. That means everybody gets it wrong, but it doesn't matter. So here I am, as promised last week, telling you a bit about how to be cool. You can be like me – desperately trendy – if you follow these simple Trendy Rules.

1. Be there ASAP. If you haven't checked out a new place to shop, eat or be seen within four weeks of its opening, don't bother at all. You're a leader, on the cutting edge of what life's all about (which is, basically, spending more money than you make, buying stuff you don't need and wasting precious time that you will want back when you are lying on your deathbed. Honestly, if you don't have children, what else is there to do? You can only read for so long before your licks get fired.)

2. You are where you eat. All you McMuffins, out of the pool.

3. Technophobia no longer makes you seem like Holmes's Dr Watson. If you can't operate a computer, a PDA or a Swiss army knife, you should be ashamed of yourself.

4. Know the difference between old-good and new-good. For example, there is really only one palpable difference between the vulcanised fat-free muffins at the Seattle Coffee Company and those at the Beverly Hills Bakery in Knightsbridge. One delivers.

5. By the time anyone else finds out what's trendy, you've already moved on to the next trend. Why? Because a) you're a leader, b) you are insatiably curious and the credit card people keep lifting your limit, c) you are neurotic and d) you don't have a recognisable raison d'être.

6. Being trendy is hard work, which must look effortless. Remember key phrases, like "This old thing?" when the tag is still on it.

7. Always remove the red sales stickers from the soles of your shoes. So how cool am I? I am so cool I wear Cutler & Gross sunglasses, not the prohibitively expensive they-saw-me-coming Porsche spectacles. As much as I love the movie *Men In Black*, I wouldn't dream of wearing Ray-Ban Predator 2s. Sure, they wear 'em in the film. But at the end of the movie, the cool MIBs are wearing another brand. (Actually, I wouldn't touch a pair of Ray-Bans because their publicist mulishly refused to send me any freebies. She obviously

doesn't know who I am – I was in *Private Eye* once. Fie on her.)

I'm so cool I wouldn't drive a Honda – especially a free one, unlike *Tara* Thingie-Thingie (apparently known as the Plank). Honda? That's for people who punch a hole in the front of the microwave and continue to use it. Back home, they're for aspiring trailer trash. Betsy Joe's got one to go to her classes in *How Astrology Affects Your Mascara*. One delivers.

I'm so cool I have to drive a car with a cool name, like the Rover Hera Boy or the Saab Story. I'm against buying that car called the Prowler on principle. I can understand the Cohens (as pitted against the Scarab), or its current incarnation, the Viper. Those are race cars, meant to be cherished and pampered and sold come the divorce. They're not exactly Sainsbury's parking lot cars.

Car companies have traditionally named their vehicles after animals (Puma, Mustang, Pacer), places (Granada, Capri, Slackpool), and Egyptian symbols for life (Ka) and the sport (version (Ka-Si)). That's OK. But who set the trend to name cars after violent perpetrators? The Prowler? What's next – the Granny Kicker? The Thug? The Munchausen Syndrome By Proxy? At this rate, both the Plank and me will be driving a Jeep Skate or a Ford Harrison – although she won't pay for hers coz she wears short skirts. Oh well.

"What are these?" Several chocolate bars are posed like bathing beauties on

my friend John's coffee table. (John is a trend-monger like me).

A trap, no doubt. They're candies. Soap. Stuck down with epoxy – anything to get me back for eating that sweetie last time. We don't have much Merano glass in Illinois but when we do, it's shaped properly, like a swan or a elow. Inedible things shouldn't tend to be food, not with so many hungry people around.

"They're new," John gestures to the bars. "I've got all three flavours from the manufacturer. You can't buy them yet." (So I can't buy them yet but he's got them? La-de-da.)

"You don't like chocolate, John."

"I know." (Touché. Smug sonofagun.)

"So what do you think of the new Oasis?"

"Bored to death," he says.

"America doesn't think the V-1 shines out of their bottoms, either," I reply.

"The V-1?"

"Oh dear! You don't know, do you? It's the latest craze. Nazi Rhyming Slang. V-1 – sun!"

"No!"

"Rudolf Hess!" I affirm. (Got him.)

One pearly Hitler Youth poking between his lips, a blush spreading over his master race, he snarls. "If you want to win the style war, you've got to be prepared to feel the breaking wind of fashion against your cheek."

"Isn't that a misquote from Fitzgerald?"

"Isn't that a misquote from Fitzgerald?" I ask.

"OK, you win."

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For today's celeb, a love child is a necessity - more flattering than a handbag and less likely to insult you in public than a girlfriend



glenda cooper

Question: What do Peter Snow, Clare Short, Imran Khan and Bill Cosby have in common? Answer: They have all been approached by this season's latest fashion accessory - someone claiming to be their love child.

For the celebrity *de nos jours*, a love child is necessary, a more flattering accompaniment than a handbag and less likely to insult you in public than a girlfriend. (Some style guru should tell Dodi Fayed that a sobbing ex-fiancée is just so last year; in fact, it's surprising that his media-savvy squeeze hasn't set up a charity for love children or adopted one.)

This week, Peter Snow provided an object lesson in dealing with unexpected offspring. The Sultan of Swing (we were previously unaware how much he swing it) is said to be delighted at the discovery of his son, Mathieu, the result of a liaison 33 years ago. When Mathieu rang up, Mr Snow said: "Don't tell me you're my son. Let's find out... Are you tall, dark and handsome?" Luckily for both he was.

Clare Short was similarly ecstatic when reunited with her son Toby, whom she had given up for adoption. "I want everyone to know, I want to show him off. It's just a happy story," she said.

These cases contrast starkly with Bill Cosby and Imran Khan, both of whom deny they fathered their alleged daughters. Cosby has just taken a DNA test to see if he is the father of Autumn Jackson, who was recently convicted for threatening to reveal she was his love child unless he paid her \$40m. And earlier this month Imran Khan challenged Sita White, mother of five-year-old Tyrian, to take him to court in Pakistan after Los Angeles Superior Court ruled "by default" that he was the father.

But handled carefully a love child offers obvious advantages for both parties. First, they are likely to get off because the natural parent never had to be the one to say, "No we're not going to the shops today... Have you done your homework?... I'm putting a lock on the phone

... I've asked you three times will you turn that rubbish down, I can't hear myself think."

Culdees on the other hand can be grateful their new parents never knew of their secret addiction to Duran Duran, their bizarre clothes taste as a sixth former, or the epic sulk they went through which lasted from their thirteenth birthday to sixteen and a half.

Second, it seems to be a positive career boost. Would Toby Graham have been a solicitor in the City if he'd stayed with Clare, or Mathieu a rich French banker? No, poor Toby would have spent his teens furiously handing out Labour posters praying his mates didn't spot him, and Mathieu would have been on swingometer polishing duty while struggling to pronounce sephologist.

But there are some rules. Love child, impress on your mother not to give you a silly name. Toby and Mathieu were born with their parents; Tyrian and Autumn do not. No one is going to believe you if you ring up and say, "Hello, I'm Fantasia and I'm your love child".

Parent, don't try to emulate Peter Snow. The man has done it with panache, you won't live up. The thought of the Prince of Wales confronted by a child claiming to be his saying: "Are you er not very tall with a - well you know, sort of, ears?" is too excruciating to be borne. Similarly Peter Stringfellow: "Hi, are you a sex god with a long blood mane and a propensity for younger and younger girlfriends?"; "Only the first two," his alleged daughter might reply.

Instead acknowledge your child gracefully, open your heart to the newspapers (*Hello!* if you're really lucky) and you're guaranteed to win Caring Parent of the Year.

Although there is a cautionary tale when praying for some past indiscretion to come to light. The late Hughie Green may have made it back to every front page but would you really want everyone to think your love child is Paula Yates?

As soon as you move to the country you realise that weather only really happens in cities. Out here in the wilds of North Essex, everyone lives inside huge, insulated cars, smearing the occasional lost cyclist or pedestrian against the hedgerows. It is perfectly safe to open the windows, here where even the attempted theft of a car makes the front page of the local paper. No noise drifts through - only a cooling, neutral breeze, that might as well be canned and sprayed.

Out in the city does it smell of summer: the sour, gritty elixir of dust and diesel that's more romantic and more powerful than any season that Wordsworth or John Clare could experience. In the city, the weather is not an option but an inescapable feature of every day. The Tube train 100ft underground is far closer to nature than you could ever get lolling around in the deserted acres of the Swan Meadow car park in Saffron Walden.

In the city, the weather is something primal and apocalyptic. So far this year we have had a period of snow, followed by a period of rain, followed by a period of sunshine. All of them have threatened the immediate end of civilisation, even if this ends seems to change from month to month. There used to be a joke about the weather in Seattle: if you didn't like it, you needed only to wait five minutes and a new one would come along. Now it seems that if you don't like the upcoming end of the world, you need only wait five days for another apocalypse to unfold.

Global warming is especially here, since it has at various times this year been produced as the explanation for exceptionally cold weather, exceptionally hot weather, and the exceptionally exceptional weather that we now have every month. There are even some people who claim that global warming does nothing, and that what we are facing is simply a periodic chaotic fluctuation in the climate, which will lead to nothing worse than a ice age.

It has been difficult ever to take these things entirely seriously, even since the historic day in 1982 (an exceptionally hot year in Sweden) when Joe Strummer came out as a closet William Rees-Mogg fan and sang: "The ice age is coming, the sun's zooming in." But perhaps his brain had been fried in the heat.

An American friend, a neighbour up the road, keeps goats and a flock of rare sheep, as befits her Christian beliefs. "The heat wave reminds me of Florida where I grew up," she says. "Everyone goes around



by Andrew Brown

So far this year we have had snow, followed by rain, followed by sunshine. All of them have threatened the immediate end of civilisation ...

saying "I think I could think if I tried, but why bother?" The goats, incidentally, love the heat. The sheep demand watering three times a day, which casts doubt on the celebrated proof that heaven is hotter than hell. This is based on impeccable Biblical scholarship: the temperature of hell cannot be higher than 444.6C, for if it were, the lake of brimstone which features so prominently in the brochures would boil away. On the other hand, the prophet Isaiah promises that the sun will shine 50 times as brightly in heaven as it does on earth, which would require a temperature of 525C.

However, one man qualified to know disputes this theory: the Rev Dr Tom Ambrose, of Ely, whose doctorate is in geology. He points out that if hell is located towards the centre of the earth, the pressure may be high enough to allow for a much greater temperature than that at which brimstone boils at sea level, so it may be hotter than heaven after all. This is a great advance in human knowledge, since it disproves the popular theory that hell is somewhere on the Northern Line. Right people, but too shallow.

The one unequivocal effect of the heat is to wipe out people's memories. As we slump in the heat like candles melting, how many people can remember that Wimbledon was nearly washed away, or

that the Glastonbury festival looked like the Battle of the Somme without the fun? Or that these extremes were immediately followed by a clutch of headlines explaining we were in the grip of a drought? I know it is hot now, and the Bordeaux vintage is coming in exceptionally early (though to California, the growers are using low-flying helicopters to blow rain away from their vines). But it is only eight weeks since summer was abolished for all time by the great floods.

Perhaps the problem is aggravated by the fact that most national newspapers are written by people who live in London, and must commute out to work in skyscrapers on

the fringes. From high up in these towers the world looks almost as dramatic as it does from an aeroplane. There is never a normal view: sights and weathers that are from street level utterly quotidian become huge, dramatic pageants of light and silence. Even on days when nothing seems to be happening, the flat wastelands of east London glisten a sunnier, metallic glitter, as if out of a Graham Greene novel. And so the weather stories grow ever more dramatic. Steel in May? Britain is in the grip of arctic weather.

Three months later, we are headed for a Mediterranean climate, or perhaps one even hotter than the Mediterranean, given that a Cumbrian rare breeds farm has been dabbling Factor 15 sunblock on its Vietnamese pot-bellied pigs. If the weather really has got too hot for Vietnamese animals, it may require a more serious explanation; and I believe I may have found it.

Earlier this year, in the *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, Dr Roger Nelson, of Princeton University, reported that the weather really was better around the university than chance would predict. Specifically, it seldom rains on Commencement Day, when 10,000 students gather in the open air. If it does rain, they have to gather, and steam, indoors, so there is a great deal of prayer for sun when the day comes up. And when he examined the records, going back 36 years, he found that over the four-day Commencement Day weekend Princeton was rained on less, and less often, than six neighbouring regions. The difference was not huge: a matter of 5 per cent. But it was noticeable, and the explanation which struck him was the one half-jokingly believed in by the university itself: that positive thinking can sometimes affect the weather. If it is the case that concentrated human longing can affect the weather, it would explain a lot of things. The rain when England play Australia - has anyone done an analysis of whether it rains more when England plays a stronger team, or would it make no difference, because they never play any other sort of cricketers?

The rain in Wimbledon is another obvious case. Of course, this year it rained and British players did well, but no one was expecting them to, and the rain had probably been ordered in advance.

This month's heat wave is simply a reaction to all the longings expressed in June, so watch out. Every time you groan and long for rain and cool, soft breezes, you store up trouble in heaven. Your prayers will be heard: the weather will swing once more in wild exaggeration. By winter, I predict, Britain will be gripped by arctic weather. Snow will fall.



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on the
Internet

Full marks to young Sarah Briggs, the Mansfield schoolgirl who refused to back down over her comments in a local newspaper. Sarah told the paper that she and her fellow students had not had the quality of teaching to which they felt entitled, because of, amongst other things, an overuse of temporary teachers.

No-one from the school contested that point, though they suggested that it might not be the whole story. But they demonstrated what was wrong with the ethos of the school by demanding that the girl apologise for having told the truth as she saw it. The decision by the Briggs family to back Sarah's refusal to say sorry led to her suspension until this week, when the school's governors eventually backed down.

Like most people who show great courage, Sarah Briggs seems slightly puzzled by people's regard for her. After all, from her point of view all she did was answer some straight questions honestly. She was promised something by grown-ups - decent teaching that would help her to pass exams - and she didn't get it. However, others did apologise, under pressure. The crime here is that, as ever, adults (except, of course, Sarah's parents) chose not to listen to children instead. The grown-ups insisted that they either kept silent or repeated what they had been told to say. It's a rotten lesson - do as

All that said, the episode leaves me feeling a little uneasy. Is this what generations of adolescent protest has come to - this sensible, moderate, pragmatic, basically unthreatening wagging of the finger at a failure to deliver our promises? The nearest we get to youthful undermining of the social order is the activity of a few anoraks on the internet. Worse still, young people's protest is all too often understood and supported by parents. Now, that's seriously weird.

The role of those unsupplied by responsibility and experience should be to compel the rest of us to stand at the ugly gap between what we say we want to achieve and what we actually do. Thank you, for example, Swampy, Animal and Co for reminding us that we shouldn't whine about congestion and pollution whilst searching for the keys to our family's second car.

But part of the value of youthful rebellion is that parents shouldn't even be able to understand it, never mind support it. A society in which new ways of seeing, being and speaking are no longer being invented is probably ready for the undertaker.

Paradoxically, some of the more challenging views in our country come from people who could not by any stretch of the imagination be called youthful. How can it be that the most over-entitled generation and the Spice Girls cult. But neither of these groups could be regarded as a menace to society; far from it - their protest is of the most conservative kind. They don't want to tear down the social order; they just want to get higher in the rankings. This is so disappointing. We yet to dis-

cover a teenage enthusiasm against which I can sternly warn my children, without facing that piling gaze which tells you that the last thing they'd get involved with is any of your dad student passions. Sex, drugs, rock & roll? Yeah, right, why don't you get a life, Dad?

Of course, youthful rebellion has another purpose. It points to where the previous generation has failed in its own ideals. The sixties teenagers were peace-lovers partly because their parents had promised in 1945 never to go to war again, and then could not resist the temptation of conflict.

They embraced sexual liberation because their parents created a rigid and repressive sexual code and then repeatedly transgressed it.

In our cases, there is some justification for the mild attack by young people on the environmental record of a 40-plus generation brought up with a commitment to a better cleaner ecological system.

But perhaps the pragmatic down-to-earth revolt of people like Sarah Briggs points to another issue. Their rebellion, if it exists, is against the failure of the institutions of public power and public service - schools and colleges, the monarchy, local government and Parliament itself. As we never tire of hearing, their heroes are individualistic, out-sized personalities with the chutzpah to take on public officials in pursuit of their own per-

sonal fulfilment - Ian Wright, Richard Branson, Liam Gallagher, Anita Roddick. Enthusiasm for the paranormal, and the paranoia industry led by *The X-Files* are tokens of a growing belief that all government is a conspiracy against the people. Even their much-reported dislike of racial bias is less about the way that history interferes with the possibility of achieving equality, and more about its effect on the right to compete.

This is worrying. At the very moment that the Blair project is trumpeting a return to community, young people's real interest look to be racing off in the opposite direction. They think hippie communes are soppy and they don't want to be forced to march to the beat of some monolithic enterprise with rules, regulations and hierarchies, even if it's for the public good. This all puts a premium on restoring confidence in the ability of collective institutions, whether they're hospitals, schools, local councils or even the local jobcentre to do what they promise to do.

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obituaries / gazette

Anna Plowden

Anna Plowden was one of the foremost object conservators of her generation and made significant contributions to the techniques and practice of conservation. Her interest was not confined to her own business, but also extended into membership of the Board of Trustees of the Victoria and Albert Museum and of various advisory bodies in the field of conservation.

She was born in 1938, the second of four children and the elder daughter of Edwin and Bridget Plowden (later Lord and Lady Plowden). She inherited from them her clarity of intelligence, her industriousness, her directness of manner, her undemonstrative but unwavering integrity, and her readiness to devote her energies with unstinting commitment to public service where she thought that there was a worthwhile contribution for her to make.

After school at New Hall, Chelmsford, she spent the academic year 1962-63 on the Diploma Course in Conservation at the Institute of Archaeology in London University, and was duly awarded her diploma. That led to a Fellowship awarded by the British School of Archaeology which made it possible for her to work on the conservation and restoration of the Nimrud Friezes in the Museum of Iraq.

In 1965, back in England, she started a one-woman freelance business in conservation, specialising in the conservation of archaeological bronzes. She was the first scientifically trained objects conservator to work in the private sector. During this time she undertook the cleaning of a set of Khmer bronze figures from Cambodia, now in the Rockefeller Museum; the removal of a wall-painting at Fort Jesus in Mombasa; the removal of wall-paintings and armorial shields from Lincoln's Inn's 16th-century gatehouse, which was being demolished, and their

restoration and replacement; and the artificial seal-glazing of 5,000 bricks in the replica building put up in its place.

As if this were not enough, she became a part-time lecturer at the Institute of Archaeology, where she taught practical conservation, and the moulding and casting of archaeological artefacts.

In 1968 she established her own company, Anna Plowden Limited, specialising in the conservation and restoration of archaeological and fine art objects.

A year later she began to work in conjunction with Peter Smith (R&R) Limited, and expanded the work of the company to include the conservation and restoration of all metal-work, stonework and organic materials (for example wood and leather).

The business flourished and grew, and in 1983 they formed a joint company, Plowden and Smith Limited, of which she was the Managing Director. She was a director of Recollections Limited from 1986 to 1993, and chairman of Art Services Limited from 1994 to 1997. She was also the co-author of *Looking After Antiques*, published in 1987.

Her business went through a difficult time in the recession of the early 1990s – conservation tends to be one of the casualties of recession – but she weathered that, and had the satisfaction of presiding over its return to prosperity as the economy recovered.

Anna Plowden readily responded to the demands which her success brought upon her to involve herself in public work: for example, as a fellow of the international Institute for Conservation; chairman from 1979 to 1983 of the Conservation Committee of the Crafts Council; a member from 1987 of the Conservation Advisory Committee of the Museums and Galleries Commission; a member from 1987 of the Council of the Textile Conservation Centre; Trustee of the

Edward James Foundation from 1990, and of the St Andrew's Conservation Trust at Wells from 1987 to 1996; and from 1990 a member of the Council of the Royal Warrant Holders Association, of which she was to have become the President next year.

In 1990 the Prime Minister appointed her to be a member of the Board of Trustees of the Victoria and Albert Museum. The V&A has a sizeable Conservation Department, extending over all the materials which feature in its collections, and it was to be expected that she would take a special and very knowledgeable interest in the work of that department. But her interest was by no means confined to conservation; she took a strong interest in, and found time to be a regular visitor to other departments as well and her observations were always extremely penetrating and to the point.

She was a very conscientious trustee: she was clearly delighted to be able to play a part in the V&A's affairs, and took a keen interest in its staff – curators, professional and technical staff and warders alike. One of her last visits to the museum, earlier this year, was to sit in on a training event for warders. She won the unqualified respect and affection of her colleagues on the board and of all the staff at the museum. In 1997 she was deservedly appointed CBE for her services to conservation.

Plowden was a quiet and private person, reserved and unassuming, with a detached and amused outlook on life, and on her fellow men and women. But, she knew her own worth, and when she contributed to a discussion, which she did sparingly, it was because she had something relevant and useful to add to it, which her colleagues knew they would benefit from hearing. She had a great capacity for friendship, and for loyalty



Industrious and with unswerving integrity: Plowden between two red sandstone figures at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery which she restored in the late 1980s

Photograph: Mayotte Magnus

to her friends and colleagues and to the institutions in which she worked.

Anna Plowden had great inner strength, and she sustained a long illness, which involved much painful and debilitating treatment, and periods of re-

mission which were all too brief, with admirable courage and patience, with characteristic determination and, at the end, with resignation. She retained a youthful complexion and appearance, so much so that it was a surprise to know

that she was nearly 60 when she died.

Robert Armstrong

Anna Bridget Plowden, conservator: born 18 June 1938; CBE 1997; died London 21 August 1997.

Arthur Prysock



Prysock sooths baritone as Nat 'King' Cole and Johnnie Ray.

Although Prysock recorded "Good Rockin' Tonight" and "I Just Want To Make Love To You", he did not want to change his style to fall in with the popularity of rock 'n' roll music. On the other hand, his brother, Red, recorded a classic, honking sax album *Rock'n' Roll*. From time to time, he worked with Red in shows billed as "The Sax and the Voice".

In 1964, Prysock signed with

the famed jazz label Verve, and made the best records of his career including *Art and Soul* (1966), *I Must Be Doing Something Right and This Is My Beloved* (both 1968). During this period, he also appeared at Carnegie Hall and hosted his own television show. He was teamed with Count Basie, notably for the album *Arthur Prysock/Count Basie* (1965), which featured seven saxophonists, but Basie does not even mention Prysock in his autobiography.

Prysock's deep voice was well suited to commercials and his series for Löwenbrau beer was well-known in America. He also made the charts with a narration, "A Working Man's Prayer" (1968), written by the country singer Ed Bruce. As with many black vocalists, Prysock made a country album: *Today I Learned Loving You Again* (1979).

By the 1970s, Prysock was

playing cabaret and club engagements around America. In 1976, prompted by his 14-year-old daughter Janine's enthusiasm for the film *Saturday Night Fever*, he cut a disco album with Billy Paul's producer, John Davis, and the Monster Orchestra called *When Love Is* (1982).

Spencer Leigh

Arthur Prysock, singer: born Spartanburg, South Carolina 2 January 1929; died Hamilton, Bermuda 21 June 1997.

In the early 1950s, many Americans thought that Arthur Prysock's soothing baritone might match Billy Eckstine's in popularity, but the rock 'n' roll era effectively crushed both careers. Despite many satisfying records, Prysock never fulfilled his potential and, in particular, his work is little known in the United Kingdom.

He was born in 1929 in Spartanburg, South Carolina. His brother, Wilbert, born three years earlier, learnt many instruments whilst on military service in the Second World War and later established himself as the saxophonist Red Prysock. Arthur also left home during the war years and worked repairing cars in Hartford, Connecticut. However, he soon discovered his vocal talent and began to rehearse with a pianist. He left his regular employment when a club-owner offered him \$3 a night.

In 1945, Buddy Johnson and his *Walkin' Rhythm* Orchestra visited Connecticut, but their resident male vocalist was sick. Johnson heard Prysock sing and immediately offered him a job. He was a member of the band for eight years, singing on several of their successful records for the US Decca label

– "They Say I'm The Biggest Fool" (1945), "Let My Love" (1947), "I Wonder Where Our Love Has Gone" (1948) and "Because" (1950).

When Johnson left Decca in 1952, Prysock remained as a solo artist. As a nod to his old friend, Johnson's greatest composition, the searing ballad "Since I Fell For You", was always part of his repertoire. His own career began well as he reached No 5 on the rhythm and blues charts with "I Didn't Sleep A Wink Last Night". But he never did as well again. His versions of "It's No Sin" and "Wheel of Fortune" were released in the UK, but the spoils went elsewhere.

By going solo, Prysock hoped to challenge Billy Eckstine as the leading black ballad singer of the day. Like Eckstine, he possessed a commanding baritone but he failed to establish his own individuality through new, well-crafted material. Eckstine was sophisticated, while one of Prysock's singles was called "Oho-Yeah!". Indeed he sometimes covered Eckstine's hits, which was scarcely a wise move. Nevertheless, readers of the *Pittsburgh Courier* voted him the Best Male Singer of 1953 ahead of such luminaries

as Nat "King" Cole and Johnnie Ray.

Although Prysock recorded "Good Rockin' Tonight" and "I Just Want To Make Love To You", he did not want to change his style to fall in with the popularity of rock 'n' roll music. On the other hand, his brother, Red, recorded a classic, honking sax album *Rock'n' Roll*. From time to time, he worked with Red in shows billed as "The Sax and the Voice".

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Spencer Leigh

Arthur Prysock, singer: born Spartanburg, South Carolina 2 January 1929; died Hamilton, Bermuda 21 June 1997.

Births, Marriages & Deaths

BIRTHS

BALKEWILL Philip, on 21 August 1997, at home, aged 57. Private funeral. Memorial service to be arranged.

PLOWDEN Anna Bridget, CBE, on 21 August 1997, daughter of Edwin and Bridget. Much loved and greatly missed by all her family during recent months. Funeral private. Memorial service to be announced. Details, if wished, to: Gynaecology Cancer Research Fund, St Bartholomew's Hospital, West Smithfield, London EC1A 7BE.

THOMAS On 16 August 1997, sadly, but peacefully, Ruth Thomas (née Duxon), of Chichester and formerly Dorking, much loved and missed by all her family and friends. Services to be held at Chichester Cathedral on Tuesday 26 August at 11.30am. Family flowers only. Donations for MindCare Benevolent Fund or Leith Hill Musical Festival Trust may be sent and enquires to Sheila & Sons, Trellis House, 100 Trellis Road, RH4 2ES, telephone 01342 682264.

For Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS, telephone 0171-293 1202.

Changing of the Guard
TODAY: The King's Troop Royal Horse Artillery, 1st Battalion The Royal Horse Guards, takes over the Queen's Guard at Horse Guards Parade. TOMORROW: The King's Troop Royal Horse Artillery mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards.

BIRTHDAYS

DAILY EXPRESS Today: Richard Addis, 45; Professor Terry Dowling, graphic designer and illustrator, 51; Mr Clifford Forsythe, MP, 68; Michael Bowler, chief executive, Kwik Fit, 48; Mr Christopher Blake, actor, 48; Mr Dale Saunders, MP, 52; Mr Geoff Capes, shot putter, 48; Sir Alan Cox, former chief executive, ASW Holdings, 61; Sir Robert Chisholm, former chairman, Rothmans International, 78; Ms Julie Drayton, 39; Sir John Hough, 60; Mr Peter Lilley, MP, 54; Mr Christopher Martin, Headmaster, Millfield School, 59; Ms Jim Murphy, MP, 30; Dr Omara O'Neill, Principal, Newman College, Cambridge, 56; Sir Brian Pearce, chairman, Housing Corporation, 64; Mr Bob Peck, actor, 52; Mr James Rump, film producer and director, 52; Mr Paul Robb, actor, 50; Mr Tony Shalhoub, author and playwright, 50; Sir Roy Strong, writer and historian, 62; Mr Peter Tatchell, gofer, 68; Field Marshal Lord Vincent of Colehurst, former chairman of Military Commissions, 66; Mr Charles Wardle, MP, 58; Sir Brian Young, former chairman, Christian Aid, 75.

NATIONAL GALLERY Today: Louis XVI, King of France, 1754; Sir Henry Thomas Tizard, scientist, 1888; Leonard Constantine, composer and critic, 1892; Mr Stephen Fry, actor and writer, 40; Lt-Col Sir John Johnston, former Comptroller, Lord Chamberlain's Office, 75; Mr Richard Meale, composer, 65; The Right Rev Cormac Murphy O'Connor, Roman Catholic Bishop of Arundel and Brighton, 65; Dr Graham Swanson, former High Court judge, 91; Mr Sam Torrance, golfer, 44; Mr Hugh Wright, Chief Master, King Edward's School, Birmingham, 59.

ANNIVERSARIES

TODAY Births: Louis XVI, King of France, 1754; Sir Henry Thomas Tizard, scientist, 1888; Leonard Constantine, composer and critic, 1892; Mr Stephen Fry, actor and writer, 40; Lt-Col Sir John Johnston, former Comptroller, Lord Chamberlain's Office, 75; Mr Richard Meale, composer, 65; The Right Rev Cormac Murphy O'Connor, Roman Catholic Bishop of Arundel and Brighton, 65; Dr Graham Swanson, former High Court judge, 91; Mr Sam Torrance, golfer, 44; Mr Hugh Wright, Chief Master, King Edward's School, Birmingham, 59.

TONIGHT Births: Giordano, Perseus, "Gory Stories" (iv); Giordano, Perseus, "Turing Phineas and his Followers", 12pm.

TOMORROW Births: Laurence, Bradbury, "Surreal Sleights of Fancy", 1pm.

BRITISH MUSEUM: George Hart, "Artemis and the Monuments of Ephesus", 1.15pm.

TOMORROW Births: Laurence, Bradbury, "Characteristic Features in English Art", 2.30pm.

TODAY Births: Giordano, Perseus, "Turing Phineas and his Followers", 12pm.

LECTURES

TODAY National Gallery: Rebecca Drew, "Gory Stories" (iv); Giordano, Perseus, "Turing Phineas and his Followers", 12pm.

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Gerald McLarnon

Gerard McLarnon was a playwright who never sought popularity. Nor did he ever find it. But he knew how to make us sit up in the playhouse, which is half the battle. If he ever bothered to fight the other half, it must be because his dialogue and his characters came to him in such a vivid and baffling rush that there was no time to sit down and shape them for Shaftesbury Avenue or Broadway, Hollywood or television.

Yet directors and actors liked the sense of theatricality which pervaded his work. There was thought behind it – muddled thought maybe – but it had without doubt a stag tang amid its Celtic twirl, flow and self-conscious flourish.

McLarnon was an Ulsterman and a man of the theatre. He had known that from his youth. Not that he had ever set foot in a playhouse or inherited any theatrical connections. But the stage somehow summoned him when he was being brought up near Belfast, and he went first into the great Sir Frank Benson's company of touring Shakespearians, then into something even better (for an Irishman), the equally great Anew McMaster's roving troupe, which used to play the fit-ups in Ireland and inspired anybody who spent even the briefest time with them.

Then came a post-war stint for Hugh Hunt at the Bristol Old Vic – still as an actor, though without much success. This is when he began to write plays. McLarnon was a Catholic. *Unhallowed* was his first title. The Arts Council gave it a prize and the Perth Repertory Theatre acted it. With religious, political, cosmic zeal he went on writing as if he were after the deepest meanings of existence while searching for a theatrical formula.

In 1952, McLarnon wrote a kind of bedroom farce, *The Wrestler's Honeymoon*, which even reached the Duchess Theatre (as *The McRoary Wif*) with a largely Irish cast. It seemed to London playgoers about as tacky as a farce could get.

Yet Laurence Olivier in his managerial heyday had taken it under his wing, before getting cold feet and hiding his link with it. The play's honour existed in a famous wretched marriage before an important professional bout and attempting not to lose his virility. If the critics were not amused the audience was; but the romp remained a three-day wonder.

McLarnon had a way with words and with stage situations which might leave a critic in the dark if required to dictate an account of it within minutes of curtain fall at the Royal Exchange in Manchester – where most of his stuff was done – but kept one unexpected and inexplicably alert, with the lit and the charge of the language. He had espe-

Dora Maar

When I was a young and raw student in Paris with Nadia Boulanger and Darius Milhaud, Tony Mayer, who was then the cultural attaché to the French Embassy in London, on one of his regular visits to Paris, took me down to his crumbling chateau in Ménerbes and thence to Dora Maar's house, writes James Stevens [further to the ob

business & city

FINANCIAL JOURNAL
OF THE YEAR

Business news desk: tel 0171-293 2636 fax 0171-293 2098
BUSINESS & CITY EDITOR: JEREMY WARNER

BT salvages merger and saves £3.5bn

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

British Telecom yesterday salvaged its planned merger with MCI, ending weeks of mounting uncertainty, by negotiating a cut of almost £350m in the purchase price for the US long-distance giant.

The talks between BT's board in London and MCI executives in the UK and US lasted until 3am yesterday morning, though both sides refused to reveal how close the companies had come to abandoning the merger, the biggest in British corporate history.

Sir Ian Vallance, BT chairman, said: "While it looked as if this partnership might not manage a rough patch of turbulence we have been going through, the fact that we have got through it was a testament to that partnership."

The deal was thrown into jeopardy after MCI's shock profit warning last month. The company predicted losses from its attack on the US phone market would double this year to \$800m (£500m).

The biggest surprise from the review was that Concert will push ahead with MCI's expansion into the \$170bn local market, though the company predicted some scope for cost savings. Timothy Price, MCI president, said speculation that the company would cut 5,000 jobs was "completely wrong".

MCI has found it much harder to break into the local phone market than it had expected. Moves by federal regulators to open the local monopoly companies to competition have bogged down with legal challenges.

The 22 per cent cut in the merger price went much further than the 10-15 per cent predicted by most analysts and looked likely to satisfy BT's big shareholders, who were furious that the senior management had been apparently unaware of MCI's problems.

Shareholders will vote on the new terms at a second round of

extraordinary meetings by early December, delaying the completed merger by some three months to 1 January. One BT investor said: "The cynical view on the price would be that things must be very bad at MCI, but we think the new deal is good news. The credibility of BT's management has been restored."

Under the renegotiated terms, BT is paying \$18.9bn (£11.9bn) for the 80 per cent of MCI it does not own, based on yesterday's closing BT share price, a reduction of almost 22 per cent over the old deal. It values MCI at £14.8bn, down from £19.1bn.

BT's shares soared 23.5p on the news to 436p, while MCI shares, which fell 15 per cent on Thursday, were up just 1 per cent in afternoon trading.

Sir Ian insisted MCI investors were not humiliated because the rise in BT shares yesterday had boosted the total value of BT's cash and shares offer. "It could well be that it is in the interests of MCI shareholders to have a smaller share of a bigger cake."

Tim Price, MCI's president, described the reduced price as a "win-win situation" for both companies. "We are excited by this deal, we are glad to have the deal back on track and we are waiting anxiously to close."

James Ross, from stockbrokers Hoare Govett, said the terms were "pretty sensible". He continued: "Of course it wasn't desirable that it got into this situation in the first place, but they seem to be back on track."

But the prolonged uncertainty since the MCI profits warning left a trail of discontent in Concert, the new merged company with BT, with speculation that some big US investors may consider taking legal action against the renegotiated terms, writes Chris Godsmark.

The revised agreement gives MCI shareholders fewer BT shares when the merger goes ahead, but more cash. Each MCI investor will now receive 3.75 BT shares, plus \$7.75 in cash, compared with the 5.4 BT



Agreed: Tim Price, MCI president (left), and Sir Ian Vallance, BT chairman, at yesterday's announcement of the amended deal

Photograph: PA

American investors left with smaller stake

MCI shareholders wake up

yesterday to the gloomy prospect of a much reduced stake in Concert, the new merged company with BT, with speculation that some big US investors may consider taking legal action against the renegotiated terms, writes Chris Godsmark.

The revised agreement gives MCI shareholders fewer BT shares when the merger goes ahead, but more cash. Each MCI investor will now receive 3.75 BT shares, plus \$7.75 in cash, compared with the 5.4 BT

shares and \$6 in cash in the original proposals.

As a result, MCI shareholders will end up owning just a quarter of Concert, instead of the 34 per cent in last November's merger terms. To compensate for the loss, BT has agreed to pay out almost \$1bn (£600m) more in cash to MCI investors. Because of the reduced share element of the revised deal, Concert will have 10 per cent fewer shares in circulation than anticipated.

But MCI shareholders were

dealt a further blow, with news that they will not now begin receiving dividends from Concert until the next financial year, starting in April 1998. Under the old deal they would have been paid the final Concert dividend for the whole of 1997/98, worth a forecast 18.5p a share according to analysts.

The difference means BT will now pay out about £630m less in dividends this year than it would otherwise have done, more than making up for the extra cash paid out for the

revised merger terms. "Let's just say the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away," one analyst said yesterday.

BT said the merger would lead off of "modest" falls in its earnings this year and next year, knocking about £90m off profits compared to if BT had stayed independent, equivalent to 1p a share.

But analysts yesterday kept their dividend forecasts unchanged yesterday, implying a yield on Concert shares of more than 5 per cent. The company

said it still intended to deliver "double digit" dividend growth in the long term.

BT also warned that the revised deal would raise its gearing – the ratio of debt to equity – from up to 90 per cent projected under the previous terms to 120 per cent. The extra debt would come not just from losses on MCI's local phone market business but also from the £500m windfall tax bill in the UK and BT's higher pensions bill following Budget changes to tax breaks on dividends.

Appleyard shares
slump as
bid talks
collapse

Clifford German

Shares in Appleyard, the embattled Yorkshire-based car dealer, slumped 10.5p to 63.5p yesterday after the company announced that talks about a possible bid, first announced in June, had ended without an acceptable offer being made.

A number of parties have shown an interest in the group after a first approach from an unnamed company, believed to be Sanderson Bramall, was made public.

But Bramall, the group's advisers, took the view that none of the bidders was willing to offer a high enough price.

Appleyard is unlikely to find a hostile bid because most car manufacturers have clauses which can void existing franchises if a company changes hands. But the company, which 10 years ago was one of the strongest quoted companies in the sector, remains beset with problems.

It is still nowhere near finding a chief executive, chairman and chief executive, when he gives up his executive role at the end of the year.

The business is also suffering from the widespread restructuring imposed by the leading car manufacturers which are reducing the number of franchises they deal with, amalgamating territories and demanding heavy capital investment to improve showrooms and customer service.

The main losers have been the small privately owned firms which cannot provide the necessary capital investment, but Appleyard has lost two prestigious Jaguar franchises in Leeds and Harrogate and several other outlets have been closed or sold.

The statement coincided with the release of figures for six months to the end of June showing a 3 per cent drop in turnover to £380m and a 16 per cent drop in profit before tax to just £3.88m, even including an exceptional profit of £725,000 on the disposal of dealerships.

The interim dividend has been cut from 3.1p to 2p. The figures were marginally better than some analysts had expected, after last year's full year loss of £5.35m, which included a charge of £8.6m to cover the cost of restructuring and slimming down the business.

Millennium row as Saatchi wins £16m contract

Cathy Newman

The controversy surrounding the millennium celebrations intensified yesterday when the New Millennium Experience Company (NMEC), the group organising the festivities, awarded a £16m advertising account for the project to M&C Saatchi, one of whose partners has been advising the NMEC since February.

Bill Muirhead, a partner at M&C Saatchi, has been giving "strategic advice" to the

ITV executives yesterday said that the appointment of an independent television commission official to a key post at Granada Media Group could lead to a conflict of interest, writes Cathy Newman.

Virginia Lee, a senior independent television commission official, has been appointed corporate affairs manager at Granada, where one of her responsibilities will be to deal with the renewal of the company's three licences.

Mr Lee has looked at licence renewal issues during her time at the independent television commission.

The independent television commission said that, while she would not be leaving until mid-October, she would no longer be working on licence renewal for the watchdog.

LIG gains US approval for thinner condom

Sameena Ahmad

London International Group, the world's leading condom manufacturer, is poised to secure US approval for the world's first polyurethane condom. The revolutionary new prophylactic will be much thinner, helping to improve sensitivity. The group is also developing a female condom to rival the much hated Femidom product.

Commenting on LIG's fe-

male condom, which is in the early stages of development, Bill Potter, London International's scientific director, said: "The concept of a female condom is of great interest to women. They want a safe method of birth control which is under their control. We are developing something with greater aesthetic appeal than Femidom."

Women have criticised Femidom, developed by US group, the Female Health Company,

for looking and feeling like a plastic bag.

The new male condom, called Durex Avanti, has double the tensile strength of conventional latex, but is 40 per cent thinner. "This condom is clear, doesn't result in allergies like latex and improves sensitivity. The biggest reason men give for not using latex condoms is that they feel like a Wellington boot," Mr Potter said.

Avanti, which has taken six

years to pass the US's stringent drug laws because of its unique material and cost £15m to develop, should go on sale in the US in the next few months and be rolled out in the UK in September. At present it can only be sold to people in the US with latex allergies, and cannot be advertised as an effective contraceptive.

Cleanance by the US Food and Drugs Administration is an important breakthrough for LIG.

The US condom market is worth around \$300m (£190m) a year, more than three times the size of the UK market.

Avanti will cost at least twice

the price of conventional condoms in the US. Its launch in the US is an attempt by LIG to maintain its market position – Durex is number two brand in the States with a 20 per cent share, behind Carter Wallace, whose Trojan brand has 60 per cent of the US market.

Interest rate fears trigger steep falls in New York and London

Tom Stevenson
Financial Editor

Shares fell sharply on both sides of the Atlantic again yesterday on fears that US and German interest rates are about to rise.

It was the third Friday in a row increasingly jittery equity markets have tumbled.

The pound also slipped further after an unexpectedly sharp

rise in German interest rates

helped us out with that. Over the last six months he has played less and less of a role.

Mr Muirhead had not been paid for his work since February, the spokesman added. "He was advising at board level, but had no formal contract or title," Mr Muirhead could not be contacted for comment.

Other agencies who pitched for the business included Abbott Mead Vickers and TBWA/Simon Palmer.

The FTSE 100 index was down more than 110 points at one stage on the back of another poor showing from Wall Street, which reacted

far this year. The FTSE 250 index closed 23.3 points lower at 4,658.7.

A rise in German rates would narrow the gap between the two countries' base rates, making the pound, which closed yesterday at DM2.91, relatively less attractive.

German import prices surged 0.6 per cent in July and 4.2 per cent over the past year, well above analysts' forecasts of 0.2 and 3.7 per cent.

German prices were boosted in the leading index was provided by BT, which closed 23.5p higher than 436p after it agreed to a forecast from the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) earlier in the week that UK interest rates have moved high enough to restrain inflation.

Smaller companies again did better, boosted in part by the weakness of the pound and by a growing belief that the secondaries represent much better value than the leading stocks that have led the market higher so

far this year. The FTSE 250 index closed 23.3 points lower at 4,658.7.

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Other data yesterday showed a resurgence of manufacturing

investment by British companies – in the second quarter of the year it was running 26 per cent higher than a year earlier. Economists said the increase was "steaming", showing that companies were reacting to competitive pressures and difficult trading conditions by raising investment rather than cutting it.

According to Kevin Darlington, an economist at ABN Amro House Govett, the figures showed that business investment has been much more resilient than headline figures earlier in the week implied.

The Office for National Statistics also issued motor vehicle production figures yesterday, which confirmed the patchy nature of the recovery. The seasonally adjusted total car production index fell from 126 in June to 122 in July. In the six months ending in July, production fell by 7.9 per cent against the previous six months.

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JEREMY WARNER

What is BT supposed to do? Hand all its surplus capital back to shareholders and settle down to managing the decline of its own domestic business? Few managements worth the name are going to be satisfied with such a dismal task

BT seems to have got away with it, but only just

Phew! Saved by regulators. It isn't often that Sir Iain Vallance, chairman of British Telecom, has cause to thank the watchdogs that govern his industry but on this occasion he certainly does. Rarely have investors had as close a shave as the huge overvalue BT so very nearly ended up paying for MCI of the US. But for the tardiness of the Federal Communications Commission in the US in approving the deal, the merger would have sailed through months ago on the original inflated terms.

The subsequent damage to BT shareholders, judging by yesterday's new terms, would have been £3bn to £4bn. It seems at least questionable that either Sir Iain or his chief executive Sir Peter Bonfield, could have survived such a costly and embarrassing error of judgement.

As it is, regulators took long enough in approving the deal to allow MCI's problems in its core long distance business and its assault on local telecoms markets in the US, fully to emerge into public view. How BT and its advisers failed to spot these difficulties at an earlier stage is another question. BT has owned 20 per cent of MCI for some years and is already represented on its board. If anyone had an insider's view of what was going on at MCI, it was BT.

Furthermore, James Dodd, senior tele-

coms analyst at Dresdner Kleinwort Benson, and others, had spotted and aired in the City the potential for serious difficulties in local telecoms long before BT forced its American partners to put out that infamous warning.

Thankfully BT has now managed to renegotiate the terms in a way that allows honour to be satisfied all round. It was touch and go. MCI will almost certainly face a flurry of litigation in the US from angry arbitrageurs and others whose fingers have been badly burnt by the turn of events. Documents filed in connection with the takeover indicated that there was no scope for renegotiating the terms. It could also reasonably be argued that the unexpected events to hit BT since the merger was announced – the windfall profits tax and the removal of tax credits on dividends – went some way to explaining the deterioration in MCI's outlook.

In the end, however, a less advantageous deal for MCI was better than no deal at all. Without the prop of the BT takeover, MCI's share price would have headed to a further south than it already has. The latest terms finally dispense with the pretence that this is a merger of equals. MCI shareholders end up with just 25 per cent of the combined company under the new offer, against more than 34 per cent under the old. The cash ele-

ment of the bid is enhanced a little, but this does no more than compensate MCI shareholders for the BT final dividend they will now not be getting.

There will be some earnings dilution next year and the remainder of this year, BT says, but thereafter the deal should begin to wash its face. In all, BT looks to have ended up with if not quite a bargain, certainly a rather better deal than if none of this had ever happened. The bigger question raised by the debacle, however, is whether BT should be buying MCI at all.

I've always largely gone along with BT's case for the MCI takeover but there is no doubt that MCI's difficulties have raised some very pointed questions. Does BT really need to buy another commodity telephony business to further its international ambitions? After a prolonged period of spectacular growth in the US during which MCI provided the main competitive challenge to AT&T, MCI is now finding the going much tougher. Growth rates have slowed and the long distance market in the US has become very much more price competitive.

Moreover, BT already has a highly successful joint venture with MCI in the services it is most interested in developing – one-stop telecommunications for big multinational business. Does it really need to go the whole

hog and merge with MCI further to develop that business? Of course it doesn't. BT and MCI come at these markets from really quite different perspectives. BT is the incumbent public telephone company, attempting to defend its market position against buccaneering newcomers. MCI is the very reverse. It is one of the outsiders trying to muscle in, an attacker of markets rather than a defender of them.

Sir Iain Vallance has tried to present this

difference of approach and culture as a boon which will be of profound assistance to BT as it mounts its assault on Europe's newly deregulated telecommunications markets. But it could just as easily work the other way round. The two may find themselves incapable of living with each other.

Despite these doubts, this is probably still the right deal for BT to be doing. The case can be argued on a number of fronts but perhaps the most compelling is that size for the sake of it may actually count for something in these fast changing and rapidly globalising markets. What is BT supposed to do? Hand all its surplus capital back to shareholders and then simply settle down to managing the decline of its own domestic business? Few managements worth the name are going to be satisfied with such a dismal task.

Combined, BT and MCI become the third

largest telecoms company in the world. Arguably, it will also be the one with the greatest international spread. The upshot is cheaper capital and an ability to take risks and seize market opportunities in a way that neither could realistically do on their own. This has been characterised by some as a thoroughly bad thing. MCI will merely end up using BT's money to advance its own uneconomic push into local US telecoms, many are warning.

But it is not really like that. Of course some of what BT and MCI do together won't work out and there will be losses that on their own neither company would find easy to justify. Some of these more risky propositions will come good, however. On balance, the greater market power that size for its own sake gives will enhance the prospects of both companies. If this were BT buying, say, a US television network, or some such other business which is seen to be converging with telecoms, then there would obviously be room for doubt. But it is not. MCI is in the same business as BT. What's more it is a business where boundaries are fast breaking down.

Not everyone will be convinced by this. BT can still expect quite considerable shareholder opposition when the MCI takeover is put to the vote. Even so, at this juncture it looks as Sir Iain has got away with it after all.

Sky moves into pay-per-view pop

Cathy Newman

BSkyB will become the first broadcaster to ask viewers to pay to watch a music concert when it screens a charity event for the victims of the Montserrat volcano next month.

The news of the concert was yesterday revealed in so-called exclusive from page story in *The Sun*, the newspaper owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, the dominant shareholder in BSkyB.

Sky will put its substantial marketing budget behind the venture, which will inevitably increase its commercial profile as it seeks to introduce more pay-per-view events. It will also be able to assess how many viewers are willing to pay to watch concerts.

Sky beat the BBC, ITV and

Channel 4 to the exclusive rights to screen the concert, which will feature stars such as Eric Clapton, Elton John, Paul McCartney, Sting and Mick Hucknall.

Subscribers to the satellite broadcaster will be given eight opportunities to view the event over a four-day period, at £4.95 a time.

A spokesman for Sky said that the company was confident of a "strong interest" in the

event as tickets for the live Albert Hall concert had sold out within 90 minutes of being offered for sale.

Sky started experimenting with pay-per-view broadcasts, where subscribers pay extra to view a one-off event, last March when a boxing match between Frank Bruno and Mike Tyson drew 660,000 paying viewers.

Sky would not say yesterday how much it had bid for the Montserrat rights, nor how

many viewers it hoped to pull in. All profits would be donated to the Montserrat Foundation, which is offering aid to the victims of the Soufrière Volcano, the company said.

To date, Sky has confined its pay-per-view ventures to boxing, showing five bouts over the last 18 months. However, the Montserrat concert will be the company's first foray into non-sporting events. Sky is widely expected to show films on a

pay-per-view basis at a later date.

The company has had talks with Cable & Wireless Communications about launching a joint pay-per-view service, but a deal is thought to be some way off being signed.

Harvey Goldsmith CBE, promoter of music for Montserrat, said Sky had come up with the "best opportunity" to raise the most money. He said that all terrestrial television companies, except Channel 5, had pitched for the rights. Mr Goldsmith added he was confident Sky would deliver a large audience.

Sir George Martin, formerly the Beatles' producer, owns a studio on Montserrat and is producing and organising the concert. He said the event would raise much needed cash for the victims and would bring the disaster into the public eye.

Rivals dig in for quarry bid battle

Sameena Ahmad

A David and Goliath bid battle is brewing in the world of stone quarrying. The fight is over Bruntcliffe Aggregates, a small quarrying company, which yesterday agreed an all-share offer from Enstone, a tiny stone company, valuing Bruntcliffe at £26.2m.

Though Enstone has already secured 50.9 per cent of Bruntcliffe's shares including its own stake, Aggregate Industries, its much larger quarrying rival, was yesterday locked in meetings to decide whether to launch a bid. Aggregate Industries has built a 22.7 per cent stake in Bruntcliffe. Capitalised at £600m against Enstone's £17m, Aggregate clearly has the fire-power to launch a much bigger offer.

However, although Aggregate had not bid for Bruntcliffe, it was confident about the outcome for its own shareholders. "We own 9.4 per cent of Bruntcliffe. If Aggregate outbids us we will make a profit," he said that Aggregate would be under pressure to raise the stakes or sell up.

"Doing nothing could give us a very big stake of a delisted company."

Juicy service contracts could see Bruntcliffe's three top directors sharing around £1.5m following a bid. Bruntcliffe's shares rose 2.5p to 41.5p, compared to the 43.75p bid price.

IN BRIEF

Huntingdon chief quits animal committee

A senior director at Huntingdon Life Sciences, the animal testing company at the centre of a Home Office investigation into animal cruelty, has resigned from an independent board which advises the Home Office on animal protection. Dr David Christopher, Huntingdon's research laboratories director, has stepped down from the Animal Procedures Committee, a body of 19 people which advises the Home Office on science, industry and animal protection. Dr Christopher has been under pressure from animal rights groups to resign after the Home Office threatened to revoke Huntingdon's licence after it upheld allegations of animal mistreatment exposed in a Channel 4 documentary earlier this year. A spokeswoman for the National Anti-Vivisection Society said yesterday: "He has finally bowed to pressure. His position was untenable." Dr Christopher is believed to be on an extended holiday and was unavailable for comment.

Saracen expects offer for Value Trust

Saracen Value Trust says it has held meetings with interested parties which could lead to an offer for the trust. MAM and Invesco are understood to be candidates, and Saracen expects to make an announcement within the next 10 days. The Trust said HSBC Asset Management Europe has written a further letter to the board but has not submitted new and improved proposals. HSBC proposed two weeks ago to remove the board of Saracen and the investment manager and to take over management of the trust.

£500,000 pay-off for Asda Property MD

Asda Property, the property investor, paid Tony Roscoe nearly £500,000 in severance pay after the company sacked him as managing director in March, far higher than the £300,000 observers assumed at the time. Patrick Ranger, property director, said that no replacement for Mr Roscoe had yet been selected, but that he expected headhunters to have a shortlist for the company by next month. Mr Roscoe left after disagreements with Manny Davidson, the chairman, whose family owns most of the company. The group also announced flat profits of 5.66p for the six months to June. Earnings per share rose to 3.9p from 3.3p, and the interim dividend was 0.9p against 0.85p.

Bass sells interests in Carlsberg-Tetley

Bass, the brewing and leisure group, has exercised and completed its option to sell all of its interests in brewer Carlsberg-Tetley to Denmark's Carlsberg for £10m in cash. Bass exercised the option following a decision by Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade, to block its proposed merger with Carlsberg-Tetley. Under the terms of the merger agreement signed between Bass and Allied Domecq in 1996, Bass said it had also asked Allied to return £30m paid by Bass for Allied's stake in Carlsberg-Tetley.

Vaux sell hotels and nursing homes

Vaux Group has sold five three-star Swallow Hotels comprising 385 bedrooms to Chasley Lifestyle and has also completed the sale of all 38 nursing homes to Highfield Group, for a total of £48m. The company said the proceeds would be invested in hotels, pubs and brewing. The sale will also enable Swallow to proceed with a project to install air conditioning in a significant proportion of the rooms in each hotel by September 1999. New pubs are either under construction or planned in the city centres of Nottingham, Sheffield, Middlesbrough and Halifax.

Graphics deal boosts VideoLogic

VideoLogic said graphics seller Matrox Graphics has signed a strategic alliance with NEC Electronics for the supply of high-performance 3D graphics processors from VideoLogic and NEC. The first product will be the new Matrox m3D, a graphics board based on the latest NEC PowerVR PCX3D processor. The Matrox m3D would be shipping in the fourth quarter of 1997 and available worldwide, VideoLogic said. The shares rose 10.5p to 64.5p.

Calidore pays £3.58m for Keystone

Calidore Group has agreed to buy the whole of the issued share capital of Keystone Solutions for £3.58m, with further payments depending on Calidore's profit performance over the next three years. Calidore is also proposing to consolidate its ordinary shares on a one-for-20 basis and has placed new ordinary shares at 90p per share to raise £1.5m for the development of the Keystone business, which develops software for legal and accountancy firms.

Markets wary of German inflation

Clifford German

For the second week running the experts have left their forecasts of the probability of EMU going ahead unchanged. However, currency markets yesterday reflected concern at the prospect of stronger inflation in Germany following higher preliminary figures for August from north-Rhine-Westphalia and Bavaria.

Indications that German inflation rates could climb back up to 2 per cent could trigger a rise in the Bundesbank's repo rate as early as next Tuesday.

Attention will then switch to the next round of meetings between the French and German governments, says Alison Collett at Paine Webber.

Chancellor Helmut Kohl and Prime Minister Lionel Jospin meet in Bonn next Thursday but no decisions of substance are expected at that stage.

The European Union's finance ministers and central bankers will take their discussions forward when they meet at Mondorf in Luxembourg on 13-14 September. The Franco-German summit will follow on 18-19 September, bringing together the heads of state for a discussion on the timing of the moves towards monetary union and any changes to budgetary policies the leading candidate countries may need to make to ensure they meet the criteria.

Monument bullish on Asian oil plan

John Willcock

Monument Oil & Gas, the independent oil company, yesterday said its plans to explore and export oil from Turkmenistan, a country bordering Iran and the Caspian Sea, were progressing well.

However, shares in the group eased 0.75p to 85.25p as the group reported weaker-than-expected results.

Tony Craven Walker, Monument's chairman, said talks were going well with the government of Turkmenistan and Mobile over a drilling venture that is already yielding 1,000 barrels of light oil a day. "Field operations have commenced in Turkmenistan and we hope to reach an early conclusion to the negotiations aimed at increasing our investment in the region," Mr Craven Walker said.

The group announced operating profits up 134 per cent to £15.4m for the half-year to 30 June. There was a smaller increase in profits after tax of 15 per cent to £7.9m, reflecting the fact that Monument stopped developing well in Liverpool Bay.

Monument also said it had two significant initiatives planned for Algeria and Pakistan in the second half of 1997.

"The figures were just a bit weaker than expected, but the shares came off ahead of the results," said one market-maker.

John Besant-Jones, an analyst with ABN Amro Hoare Govett, said the figures were "probably a little disappointing" although he added the start-up costs at Liverpool Bay made it difficult to judge.

The statement on the Turkmenistan talks was "quite positive for the shares".

Monument's shares rose 1.5p to 86.75p.

and said afterwards that both teams had "common ground" on the alliance.

The Commission is thought to be calling on British Airways to give up 350 of its lucrative take-off and landing slots at Heathrow Airport as condition for the alliance going ahead.

The months of horse-trading over the deal, including regulations in London, Washington and Brussels, have increasingly focused on whether BA will be able to receive financial compensation for any slots divested.

The deal will give BA and American Airlines some 60 per cent of UK-US flights and has already attracted huge opposition from rival airlines in the US and Europe.

BA will get 22.75 per cent of the slots.

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sport

Critical point for ailing Agassi

John Roberts reports from New York on the fall of the former world No 1 who hopes to rediscover his touch at the US Open, which starts on Monday

The actress Tallulah Bankhead apparently became so anxious watching Bill Tilden lose in the 1928 Wimbledon semi-finals that she ate the rose from her lapel. Entire gardens might be under threat from Brooke Shields.

You may remember Ms Shields' husband, Andre Agassi. Their wedding in California in April was his biggest match of the season.

There were rumours that Agassi was on the point of retiring, which proved premature. He had given the Australian Open a miss, explaining that he needed to rest, and was absent from the French Open and Wimbledon because of a tendon injury to his right wrist.

On returning to the court after 10 weeks, the Las Vegas performances suggested disorientation, his opening round defeats for the year extending to seven as he strove for a semblance of form ahead of the United States Open, which starts on Monday here.

Officials of the United States Tennis Association trust that the unseeded Agassi will at least put in an appearance. They have already lost Steffi Graf and Boris Becker from the cast list, and Monica Seles' challenge may be debilitated by a flu virus.

The organisers are awaiting confirmation that the mayor, Rudolph Giuliani, will accept an invitation to make a speech to inaugurate the Arthur Ashe Stadium on Monday night. Giuliani has been critical of a contract signed by his tennis-loving predecessor, David Dinkins, restricting flights over Flushing Meadows from La Guardia Airport during the tournament.

While Mayor Giuliani's support would be useful, the need for a revitalised Agassi is pressing. A world ranking of No 59 might be a fair assessment of where Agassi's tennis stands, but as a personality he is still No 1, partly because he is still No 1, partly because of a dearth of challengers in that department.

Agged 27, Agassi bloomed

late and wilted early in terms of Grand Slam titles, winning Wimbledon in 1992, the US Open in 1994 and the Australian Open in 1995. His 11 years on the circuit, however, have been a triumph of marketing for the player and his marketing consultant, Nike.

Reportedly worth £75m, Agassi has earned £8.5m in official prize-money. A contract with Nike agreed in 1995 was reportedly for \$100m (£65m) over 10 years.

It seems doubtful that he would continue playing without the thrill of success. Clauses in contracts? Agassi has been Santa Claus for his sponsors. How many male athletes have created so much interest and speculation about what he wore? In the cause of commerce, Agassi has gone through a garish gamut of 'hot lava', 'hot lime', 'grunge' (complete with black socks and sneakers), had hair days and shaven-headed days.

Philip Agassi's brother and business adviser, has been quoted as saying, 'Andre's great-great-grandchildren won't have to worry about money. Andre has more money than he could spend. He wouldn't sign long-term contracts with those companies to play, and then quit the game. Andre is still in his prime. He has a good three to five years to return to the top 10. Who knows? It could be longer. He hasn't lost his lust for the game.'

But what about his form? Last month, responding to suggestions that marriage had

changed his tennis priorities, Agassi said: 'The people saying that are probably the same people saying Brooks is the reason I got to No 1.'

Perhaps. But aside from one or two Davis Cup performances and the dispensation of being allowed to curse his way to an Olympic gold medal in Atlanta last year, Agassi has hardly been recognisable as the same player since losing to Pete Sampras in the 1995 US Open final.

Agassi, the defending champion and No 1 in the world at the time, was defeated in four sets by Sampras, the world No 2. The outcome of one marathon rally might have changed the course of their respective careers.

Sampras had reached set point on Agassi's serve in the opening set. Agassi put the ball in play, Sampras hit a return, and the players became synchronised in a breathtaking duel of angled groundstrokes. On the 22nd stroke, Sampras outmanoeuvred Agassi with a forehand and delivered a backhand winner across the court.

It was an example, Agassi said, of Sampras's 'explosiveness'. It might also be the moment when their rivalry was born.

That one point in that match was significant, Sampras said during a break in his preparations the other day, 'because at that point Andre had won 25 straight matches, and he worked so hard to get to No 1 in the world. To come up short at the US Open, the most important tournament we have in

the States, I'm sure was very tough to get over.'

He showed glimpses of his form there, but he hasn't been as consistent as I think he should be. So it's something maybe he hasn't quite rebounded from. It's something that I'm sure he's thought about and whatever. But I'm sure he's put it behind him. He's had a tough summer. I'm sure at the US Open time

he'll be ready. His confidence might not quite be where it was a couple of years ago, but with a couple of matches under his belt he'll be tough to beat.'

We shall see. After losing recently to his compatriot Justin Gimelstob, Agassi said: 'It will take a while to get that confidence back, to prove to myself I can beat these guys day in and day out again. It's just grind.'

One wonders how many shots Gilbert, now Agassi's coach, puts past the Las Vegas

on the practice court.

You've got to pay the price and do it. I certainly am committed to that challenge and I will do it.'

John McEnroe was about to be 27 when he decided to take a seven-month sabbatical. He never quite reproduced his previous level of performance. The New Yorker interrupted his career for marriage to the actress Tatia O'Neal and fatherhood after losing in the first round of the Masters in January 1986.

That defeat, 6-1 in the third set, was by the Californian Brad Gilbert, who had won only one set in their seven previous matches.

'When I start losing to the Brad Gilberts of this world,' McEnroe said, 'I've got to reconsider what I'm doing even

playing this game.'

One wonders how many shots Gilbert, now Agassi's coach, puts past the Las Vegas

on the practice court.

I perceive I have in the sport,

The beginning of the end? Andre Agassi (left) with Pete Sampras after losing to him in the 1995 US Open final. Photograph: AP

1997: A YEAR TO FORGET FOR THE FALLEN CHAMPION

San Jose
1st rd to M Kohlschreiber
2nd rd to M Monfils
SF lost to G Doyle Valdés

Championships
SF lost to P Simon (AUS) 7-6 6-4

Washington
1st rd lost to D Fibach (USA) 2-6 6-4 6-4

Memphis
1st rd by

Los Angeles
1st rd to J Gobet (FRA) 6-3 6-3

1997 record: 11-19 W 9-1 L 10

Current world ranking: No 89

Scottsdale
1st rd to J Gobet (FRA) 6-3 6-3

Winnipeg
SF lost to G Doyle Valdés

1997 record: 12-12 W 10-1 L 10

Seattle
SF lost to J Gobet (FRA) 6-3 6-3

1997 record: 12-12 W 10-1 L 10

1997: A YEAR TO FORGET FOR THE FALLEN CHAMPION

Atlanta
1st rd to J Ondrak (CZE) 6-3 6-2

Chichester
1st rd to G. K. Anderson (GBR) 6-3 6-1

Indianapolis
1st rd to D. Sharpen (GBR) 6-2 4-6 6-5

2nd rd to J. Ferrer (FRA) 7-6 6-2

2nd rd to M. Coric (CRO) 6-3 5-7 6-3

1997 record: 12-12 W 10-1 L 10

2nd rd to D. Fibach (USA) 2-6 6-4 6-4

2nd rd to M. Woodforde (GBR) 6-3 6-1

1997 record: 12-12 W 10-1 L 10

2nd rd to M. Woodforde (GBR) 6-3 6-1

1997 record: 12-12 W 10-1 L 10

Pentad to whet Dettori's appetite

Racing

GREG WOOD

After three days at York, and in particular a Nunthorpe Stakes which provided enough drama for an entire month of meetings, it is hardly surprising that decent horses are thin on the ground at Goodwood today.

Just four will go to post for the Celebration Mile, forcing those who prefer quality to pin-sticking in big fields of handicappers to look abroad for an interest, notably to the Prix Momy, one of France's most significant juvenile events, at Deauville tomorrow. Allied Forces, meanwhile, will represent the British-based end of the Godolphin organisation in the Arlington Million in Chicago, with Frankie Dettori in the saddle.

It will be a busy weekend for the Italian, who has in his trip to the United States while also attempting to haul himself past Kieren Fallon in the race for the jockeys' championship. The

head-to-head between the two – Pat Eddery, the third challenger, is riding in France – will be an added attraction for the Sussex crowd. Only Dettori has a ride in the Celebration Mile, however, in which he and Cape Cross must try to overcome a white-hot favourite in Among Men.

Among Men was beaten for the first time in his four-race career over this course and distance last time, but as the event in question was the Sussex Stakes his performance hardly counts as a desperate failure for one with no previous experience at Group One level.

But only the foolhardy will stride into Goodwood's bet-ring to have a lumpy bet on the favourite since Michael Stoute's runner did not appear entirely at home on the down-and-up gradients that day.

Asirakat, by Danzig out of Elle Seine, dam of the Irish 1,000 Guineas winner Mehtaf, is not without a chance on Cape Cross, who is a course winner – and, for betting purposes this race makes little appeal.

In terms of prestige, the main supporting race is the March Stakes, which in theory at least is a St Leger trial.

Thanks to the BBC, punters now have a new theory as to how it acquired its name: you will have to march down to the local betting shop if you want to see it live. Quite why the broadcasters are unable to cover a race at 2.15 on Saturday afternoon – they manage to do so, after all, most weekends of the year – is anyone's guess, not

least when it is sponsored by another arm of their organisation, Radio Five.

This year the loss is tolerable with another small field – and only two, Palio Sky and Book At Bedtime, are entered in the Doncaster Classic. Any of the five runners could conceivably win, but Pusted (2.15) should get Dettori's day off to an ideal start.

More interesting for bettors are the two televised handicaps, and here the honours may be shared between Fallon and Det-

tori. Dancing Image will surely start favourite for the Crown, Rated Handicap, and deserves to do so after a smooth win over course and distance three weeks ago.

However, that contest was not a handicap and today's opposition looks far more demanding. In particular KING OF PERU (map 2.45), another with excellent winning form at the track, will offer value after an excellent run in the Stewards' Cup. He should do even better today with an extra furlong to travel, and another who ran well in the same race, Faraway Lass (next best 3.15), appears to have the sprint handicap at her mercy.

Dettori might have expected to partner Desert Prince, the sole British-trained runner in tomorrow's Prix Momy, if he was not going to be in America. Instead, it is Fallon who will attempt to give David Loder his second successive win in the Group One race, a mission in which he may well succeed given

Desert Prince's excellent second place in the Coventry Stakes at Royal Ascot.

Hecremundi (John Reid) will represent Aidan O'Brien in the same race, but the favourite will surely be Andre Fabre's Xaar, Classic Cliche, Chief Contender, Orchestra Stall and Persian

Desert Prince's runner but he is handily down for Michael Roberts to be prominent from the start.

□□□

3.15: High-down runners frequently have an edge in big-field sprinters here, though that was not the case in the Stewards' Cup here three weeks ago. On their good runs in that event, Faraway Lass and Oggi will be very strong claims here and look best of the numbers. There will be plenty of pace on the



Cruel Jibe for Fallon

Asirakat had her price cut to as low as 16-1 for the 1,000 Guineas after denting the reputation of Henry Cecil's highly rated Jibe at Newmarket yesterday.

Asirakat, by Danzig out of Elle Seine, dam of the Irish 1,000 Guineas winner Mehtaf, made use to win by one and three-quarter lengths. Jibe, however, to win by one and three-quarter lengths.

Fantasy Island, a debut winner at Newmarket, is now 20-1 with Ladbrokes for the 2,000 Guineas. Hills have him at 25-1.

William Hill Jibe, who had drifted from 16-1 to 20-1 for the 1,000 Guineas after denting the reputation of Henry Cecil's highly rated Jibe at Newmarket yesterday.

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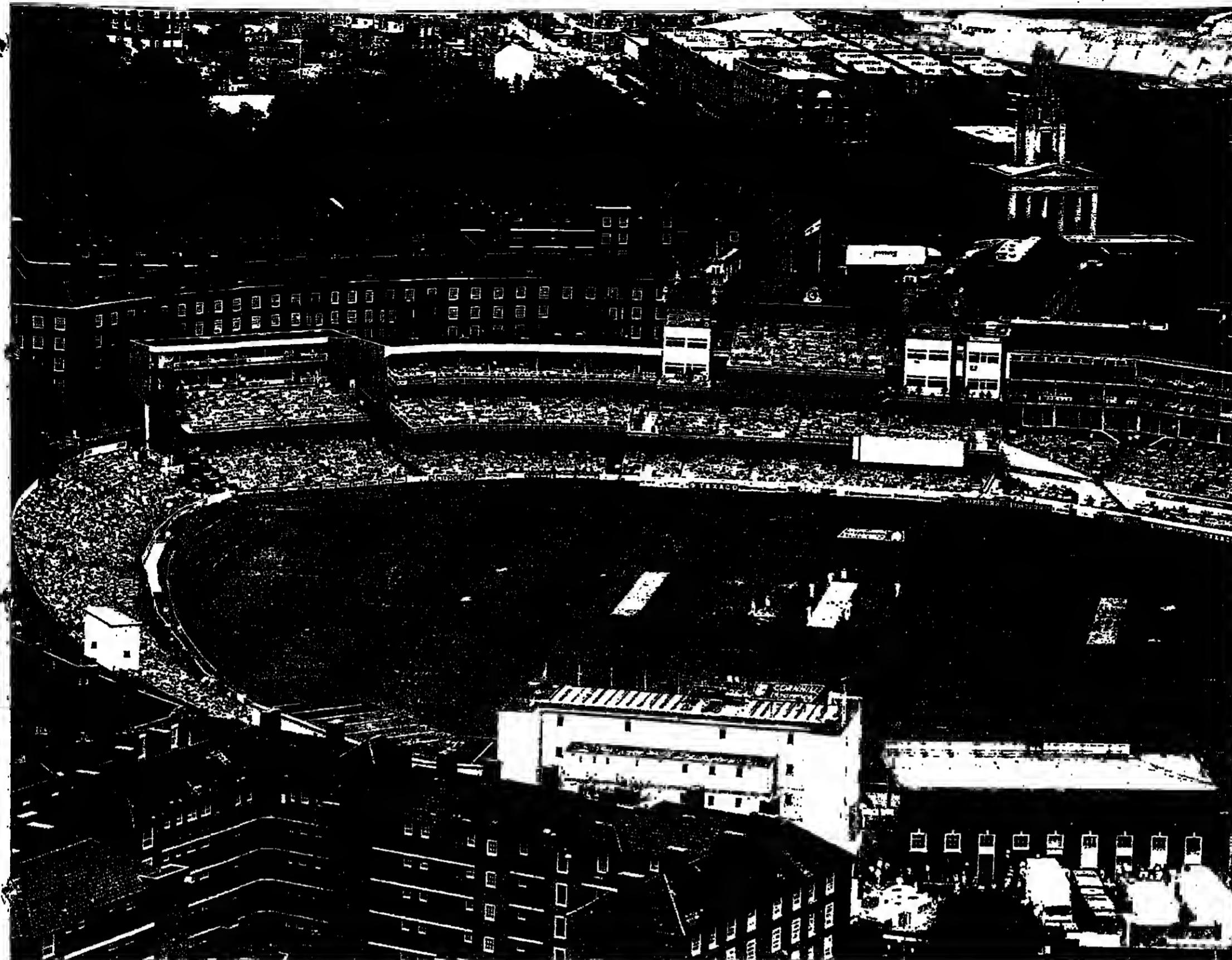
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The view from an air balloon above The Oval yesterday as England played Australia on the second day of the sixth and final Test match

Photograph: Stu Forster/Allsport

Hick and Moody give Worcestershire control

Cricket

MIKE CAREY
reports from Edgbaston
Warwickshire 252 and 8-1
Worcestershire 448

Worcestershire have surprised a few people, maybe including themselves, by their surge up the Championship table, but they are not half bad at accepting the main chance. Helped by another fielding lapse, they ground out a very handy lead yesterday to bat Warwickshire out of the game.

It was gritty, old fashioned stuff, as befit a contest that many say makes the Roses match seem like a Vicarage party on comparison. Warwickshire will now find themselves under pressure on their own variable pitch, especially if the suggestions of wear and tear become reality.

After their misadventures in the field the previous day when, incidentally, television pictures suggested that Nick Knight had taken a perfectly legitimate catch when Graeme Hick had made 10, Warwickshire could have done without dropping

another slip catch as early as the sixth over.

Richard Illingworth, previously missed at 11 and 23, escaped again at 81 when Graeme Welch put him down off Dougie Brown. Warwickshire were thus condemned to going through the pre-lunch session for the second successive day without getting the same pair of batsmen out, which must be some kind of macabre record.

With Hick quickly picking off anything wayward at the other end, all was sublime in Worcestershire's world until with Illingworth on 99, the game became anaesthetised for seven overs until he obtained the single needed for his fourth first-class hundred, three of them made as nightwatchman. His job done, he was caught behind off Ashley Giles after facing 273 balls.

Hick reached his fifth century of the season with rather more panache, driving Neil Smith off a straight six. He had turned to acknowledge the applause from the dressing-room before the ball crossed the boundary rope. When he got out, after 250 balls, from a stroke that owed

the club's secretary, Michael Vockins, said: "We felt it was right to reduce the size of the playing staff to allow us room to sign one or two key players as the opportunity arises."

Worcestershire have already completed the signing of Cornwall's 18-year-old left-handed batsman, Ryan Driver.

Robinson and Astle halt Essex

JON CULLEY

Reports from Worksop
Essex 440-7 dec and 10-1
Nottinghamshire 351-3 dec

This may be the match that rules Essex out of the Championship picture. Although they have a fixture in hand on some of the other contenders, only a win will keep them in realistic contention and that seems unlikely now.

After centuries by Tim Robinson and Nathan Astle, Nottinghamshire declared 89 behind yesterday evening, obliging Essex, who had extended their lead to 99 for the loss of one wicket by the close, to come up with a suitable challenge today.

Recent history suggests that spinners do well on the last day here, but Peter Such will need more help from the pitch than is obtained yesterday to be Essex's match-winner.

Such swapped one end for the other repeatedly the hope of finding encouragement, but a slow surface remained unresponsive. The England off-spinner was among eight bowlers employed by Essex, none of whom was able to disrupt the serene progress made by Robinson and Astle during a partnership worth 193 runs in 49 overs.

After a year of frustration, interrupted by a broken hand, Robinson was in solidly good order in making his first hundred of the summer and remained unbeaten for almost six hours for his 143, hitting 19 boundaries. Typically, the innings had some turgid passages, but the former captain entered into the spirit of things when the current skipper, Paul Johnson, emerged at two down to smash 41 off 40 balls. They added 97 in 17 overs before Johnson holed out to long on and became the match-winner.

Astle, the New Zealander whom Nottinghamshire hope will be succeeded by Shane Warne as their overseas player in 1998, equalled his best score for the county in the grand manner by depositing Ashley Cowan into the supermarket car park behind mid-wicket, having faced 150 balls and hit 16 fours. He had made no addition when he then drove loosely to extra cover off the same bowler.

Kent's Graham Cowdry and Mark Ealham scored resolute centuries against Somersett at Taunton yesterday as Chris Silverwood ended with four wickets to add to his first five-wicket haul.

The home side had to work unexpectedly hard for their success as the visitors—including two former Tykes—showed some dogged resistance.

Sussex began the third day on 41 for 6, requiring 84 to make Yorkshire win Susses at Scarborough yesterday as Chris Silverwood ended with four wickets to add to his first five-wicket haul.

The home side had to work unexpectedly hard for their success as the visitors—including two former Tykes—showed some dogged resistance.

After starting his innings as nightwatchman on Wednesday, Graeme Hick and Richard Illingworth, struck centuries against Warwickshire to put their side in a commanding position at Edgbaston.

Hick was eventually lbw to Paul Hutchison, who was awarded his second team cap out in the middle to mark that breakthrough.

Craig White then had Amer Khan caught at mid-on from a mistimed pull while Jarvis's innings ended at 51, his fourth Championship half-century of the season, when he aimed a big hit at White, missed and was lbw.

His runs came from 70 balls and included eight fours. He needed one piece of good fortune for, on 19, he was missed in the gully off Silverwood.

TODAY'S NUMBER

20

The number of brands of cigar on sale at golf's US PGA last weekend as a craze sweeps the US for on-course smoking. Larry Laoretto, of the Senior Tour, smokes six a round, and has a sponsorship deal that gives him 4,000 a year. The Cigar Smoking Cigars Association's motto is 'Cigars and Golf. They're Not a Habit, They're a Lifestyle.'

Easy for Yorkshire

ROUND-UP

Even at the end Yorkshire's frustrations continued as Mark Robinson, one of the game's most notorious rabbits, contributed 18 lifting Sussex to 137.

Although Yorkshire's target of 13 was no more than a formality they lost Anthony McGrath in the first over when he was caught behind off Alex Edwards.

The Worcestershire pair, Graeme Hick and Richard Illingworth, struck centuries against Warwickshire to put their side in a commanding position at Edgbaston.

After starting his innings as nightwatchman on Wednesday, Graeme Hick and Richard Illingworth went on to score 112 before being trapped by Ashley Giles, who also claimed the wicket of Hick (12).

Kent's Graham Cowdry and Mark Ealham scored resolute centuries against Somersett at Taunton yesterday as Chris Silverwood ended with four wickets to add to his first five-wicket haul.

The home side had to work unexpectedly hard for their success as the visitors—including two former Tykes—showed some dogged resistance.

After starting his innings as

nightwatchman on Wednesday, Graeme Hick and Richard Illingworth became Graham Napier's maiden Championship victim, but the 17-year-old seam-bowling all-rounder's joy at obtaining an lbw verdict was tempered somewhat when Astle and Robinson went after him after lunch.

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الآن من الأصل

Sponsor surprises Super League

Rugby League

DAVE HADFIELD

Super League, the flagship of rugby league in this country, is to lose its sponsor with a year still left to run on the contract.

Stones, part of the giant Bass Brewers group, is withdrawing from its sponsorship two years into a three-year deal, leaving the competition with the task of finding a new backer in time for next season.

The brand—a draught and canned bitter brewed in and primarily associated with the north of England—has been heavily involved with the game for 11 years, sponsoring what was then the Rugby League Championship for nine seasons and then continuing its support for the first two seasons of Super League.

It has also sponsored the end-of-season Premiership play-offs and the leading individual awards for players and coaches, a total package now worth almost £500,000 a season to the game.

Although that shrinks by comparison with the investment on behalf of another Bass brand, Carling lager, in football's FA Premiership, it is big money for rugby league; to lose it a year ahead of schedule is a major blow.

Neither Stones nor the Rugby League would comment yesterday, as they made preparations for the presentation of the championship trophy to the Bradford Bulls at Old Trafford last night, but an announcement is planned for early next week.

That announcement will be couched in amicable terms, but it is understood that the League believes that the apparent fragmentation of the game over recent months has played a part in the company's decision.

The 12 Super League clubs have, as of this season, their own marketing organisation, Rugby League (Europe), whose priority must now surely be to secure new sponsors to fill the void when Stones bow out after the Premiership final at Old Trafford in September.

Broncos hit by division

Brisbane Broncos, until recently the most popular team in Australia, are defying the accepted logic of professional sport. The more they win, the smaller their crowds this season. Not even a lengthy winning streak at home and a position on top of league can protect the Broncos from the mood of despair that now engulfs the game in Australia.

Two years after leading a mass defection of clubs to the rebel Super League, the Broncos have become victim of the bitter divisions they helped create. Against Rupert Murdoch's expectations, the Australian Rugby League has refused to capitulate, frustrating his ambition to own the country's only rugby league competition. The game has suffered endless months of recrimination, leaving the rival leagues in a mess and prompting supporters on both sides to walk away.

Two months ago, sensing the urgent need for peace, not to mention a massive loss in income, both sides entered talks aimed at unifying the sport again next season.

But a breakdown in negotiations this week prompted a widespread belief that rugby league could be mired in an irreversible decline.

"I fear that our future is not looking too good. The business world is not interested in rugby league at the moment because of the divisions," said the former Australian captain and current Canberra Raiders coach, Mal Meninga. "Our support down here at the moment is pretty ordinary," he added.

The former ARL chairman Ken Arthurson, who led the fight against Super League before retiring on health grounds in March, has no sympathy for the Raiders, and even less for Brisbane. "I think the Broncos' greed goes too much for them," he said. "They were making very good money (before the split) but they wanted to make more."

Merchandising, sponsorship and television ratings have collapsed, while players' wages have spiralled as the rival leagues entered a bidding war to secure the best talent.

"If there isn't peace, the clubs won't survive financially," said the Broncos' co-founder and stern ARL critic Paul Morgan.

CRICKET SCOREBOARD

Britannic Assurance County Championship	
Third day of four: 11.0 today	
Durham v Middlesex	
MIDDLESEX v DURHAM	
Durham 1st Innings	
100	1-153, 2-171, 3-190, 4-209, 5-228, 6-247, 7-266, 8-285, 9-304, 10-323, 11-342, 12-361, 13-380, 14-399, 15-418, 16-437, 17-456, 18-475, 19-494, 20-513, 21-532, 22-551, 23-570, 24-589, 25-608, 26-627, 27-646, 28-665, 29-684, 30-703, 31-722, 32-741, 33-760, 34-779, 35-798, 36-817, 37-836, 38-855, 39-874, 40-893, 41-912, 42-931, 43-950, 44-969, 45-988, 46-1007, 47-1026, 48-1045, 49-1064, 50-1083, 51-1102, 52-1121, 53-1140, 54-1159, 55-1178, 56-1197, 57-1216, 58-1235, 59-1254, 60-1273, 61-1292, 62-1311, 63-1330, 64-1349, 65-1368, 66-1387, 67-1406, 68-1425, 69-1444, 70-1463, 71-1482, 72-1501, 73-1520, 74-1539, 75-1558, 76-1577, 77-1596, 78-1615, 79-1634, 80-1653, 81-1672, 82-1691, 83-1710, 84-1729, 85-1748, 86-1767, 87-1786, 88-1805, 89-1824, 90-1843, 91-1862, 92-1881, 93-1900, 94-1919, 95-1938, 96-1957, 97-1976, 98-1995, 99-2014, 100-2033, 101-2052, 102-2071, 103-2090, 104-2109, 105-2128, 106-2147, 107-2166, 108-2185, 109-2204, 110-2223, 111-2242, 112-2261, 113-2280, 114-2299, 115-2318, 116-2337, 117-2356, 118-2375, 119-2394, 120-2413, 121-2432, 122-2451, 123-2470, 124-2489, 125-2508, 126-2527, 127-2546, 128-2565, 129-2584, 130-2603, 131-2622, 132-2641, 133-2660, 134-2679, 135-2698, 136-2717, 137-2736, 138-2755, 139-2774, 140-2793, 141-2812, 142-2831, 143-2850, 144-2869, 145-2888, 146-2907, 147-2926, 148-2945, 149-2964, 150-2983, 151-3002, 152-3021, 153-3040, 154-3059, 155-3078, 156-3097, 157-3116, 158-3135, 159-3154, 160-3173, 161-3192, 162-3211, 163-3230, 164-3249, 165-3268, 166-3287, 167-3306, 168-3325, 169-3344, 170-3363, 171-3382, 172-3401, 173-3420, 174-3439, 175-3458, 176-3477, 177-3496, 178-3515, 179-3534, 180-3553, 181-3572, 182-3591, 183-3610, 184-3629, 185-3648, 186-3667, 187-3686, 188-3705, 189-3724, 190-3743, 191-3762, 192-3781, 193-3790, 194-3809, 195-3828, 196-3847, 197-3866, 198-3885, 199-3904, 200-3923, 201-3942, 202-3961, 203-3980, 204-3999, 205-4018, 206-4037, 207-4056, 208-4075, 209-4094, 210-4113, 211-4132, 212-4151, 213-4170, 214-4189, 215-4208, 216-4227, 217-4246, 218-4265, 219-4284, 220-4303, 221-4322, 222-4341, 223-4360, 224-4379, 225-4398, 226-4417, 227-4436, 228-4455, 229-4474, 230-4493, 231-4512, 232-4531, 233-4550, 234-4569, 235-4588, 236-4607, 237-4626, 238-4645, 239-4664, 240-4683, 241-4702, 242-4721, 243-4740, 244-4759, 245-4778, 246-4797, 247-4816, 248-4835, 249-4854, 250-4873, 251-4892, 252-4911, 253-4930, 254-4949, 255-4968, 256-4987, 257-5006,

sport

Wright a model for modern striker

Ian Wright needs two goals to eclipse Cliff Bastin's 58-year scoring record for Arsenal. Glenn Moore looks at the art of scoring and the Gunners striker's place in the pantheon of hit men

The goalscorer of the week, Germany's Oliver Bierhoff, said after his five-minute hat-trick against Northern Ireland that his art was simply a case of "closing your eyes and whacking that ball".

Jürgen Klinsmann took a more considered line. "Goalscorers have to be within you, but, while it is a natural talent, it has to be developed and nourished with a lot of work."

Ian Wright, who hopes to overtake Cliff Bastin's 58-year-old Arsenal goalscorer record at Southampton today, is inclined towards the latter view. Always a natural goalscorer, even while playing amateur football in south-east London, he has refined his skill as a professional, learning much from partners like Mark Bright, Alan Smith and Dennis Bergkamp.

Goalscorers are the glory boys, the ones with the highest transfer fees, highest wages and highest profiles. Team-mates may sometimes resent this but they know they cannot do without them. Ronnie Moore, newly installed at Rotherham, echoed the lament of managers everywhere when he said on the season's eve, "we could do with a 20-goal-a-season striker."

There are not many about. In England only eight players have scored 20 goals in each of the last two seasons: Wright, Alan Shearer, Les Ferdinand, Robbie Fowler, Dwight Yorke, John Aldridge, Shaun Goater and Kyle Lightbourne. Look back four seasons and all but Shearer, Wright and Aldridge have dropped out. Only Wright has scored 20 goals in each of the last seven seasons.

Wright's obvious physical



Photographs: Ian Wright (Allsport); Cliff Bastin (Julian Getty)

quality is his pace, others, like Ferdinand, have great heading ability while Ronaldinho has supreme ball control. Some, like Aldridge, have none of those aspects in abundance but are gifted at simply being in the right place at the right time. "It's all about movement in the box, getting away from your marker," he said, adding: "It's a matter of instinct."

Consistent goalscorers are cool finishers with a range of executions. They are usually mentally and physically strong and brave with plenty of confidence. They are also, admits Wright, selfish. In his recent autobiography, Wright owned up to the

neediness required. "I have never seen a top striker who has not had the selfish streak in him," he wrote. "Anybody who plays up front and says they're happy to see the team win even if they don't score is a liar. Sometimes you say that because you don't want them to think you're a big-headed image but deep in your heart you know it's rubbish. I'm desperate for goals; they're what my job is all about, and if I'm not scoring – even if the team is winning – I suck."

This is a lot more believable than Shearer's refrain, "as long as the team wins I don't care who scores" but it does create problems. Smith, Wright's first-part-

ner at Highbury, said this week "it isn't easy for partners to develop a two-way relationship since whenever he gets the ball near goal only white posts, not team-mates, come into focus."

It is hard to argue with this approach when you consider his record. With 177 goals for Arsenal (after 117 for Crystal Palace) in all competitions, Wright is one short of Bastin's total, set in 1939, and way ahead on strike-rate. This might be expected since Bastin was a wing-hitter, not all of Arsenal's established forwards, only Ted Drake scored his goals more quickly. Drake scored 139 goals at one every 1.32 games,

Wright's Arsenal goals have come in 1927-28, one every 1.5 games (a strike-rate of 0.67). Given the difficulty of scoring goals in the modern era it could be argued that Wright's achievement is the greater even if he has had more competitions to score in. Sixty years ago defences were far less organised, goalkeepers less protected and midfielders not often inclined to track back. The balls and equipment were much heavier and more cumbersome but that also applied to defenders.

On the other hand the game was more physical and medical knowledge less advanced. Dixie Dean, who scored a record

60 League goals in 1927-28,

26 in 296 games, a strike-rate

of 0.9 (a goal every 1.1 games).

Unsurprisingly, he was very single-minded. At Middlesbrough his manager, Bob Dennison, told him "there has been a complaint from one of the lads that you'll give it to me every time I get the ball, even when they are not scoring they may as well accept the glory when they do. As Klinsmann, 11 and a half hours without an international goal, reflected this week: "People expect goals from me but forwards need help from others, in some games I have not had one chance."

One every two games and Gary Lineker was only marginally better.

Those figures make Wright's record with Arsenal even more impressive, but while he accepts his team-mates have also played a big part they are not getting much of a mention. However, as forwards get the blame when they are not scoring they may as well accept the glory when they do. As Klinsmann, 11 and a half hours without an international goal, reflected this week: "People expect goals from me but forwards need help from others, in some games I have not had one chance."

Such is Clough's reputation as a manager it is often overlooked that he has the best post-war goal ratio of any striker. Playing for Middlesbrough and Sunderland mainly in the old

Second Division he scored 267 goals in 296 games, a strike-rate of 0.9 (a goal every 1.1 games).

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Clough's record is just ahead of Dean who, playing mainly in the old First Division for Everton, scored 408 League and cup goals on one every 1.15 games. By way of comparison, Ian Rush's 366 goals have come at

one every two games and Gary Lineker was only marginally better.

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It often pays to stick with the devil you know even if the devils you know are close to drawing their footballing pensions

The prefix 'canny', as applied to Ken Dalglish, has become one of football's most enduring clichés, and Dalglish's dabblings in the transfer market this week suggest that it's also one of the most convincing. It doesn't take a genius to work out that a 36,000 full house every match (and a waiting list as long as the proverbial arm), a wealthy benefactor with his fingers in most of the pies in the North-east, and an income of over £13m generated from the recent sale of players, all adds up to a healthy bank balance.

Which must mean that, despite the apparently tight financial constraints placed on the football club by the plc, Dalglish has a few bob to rub together. Yet, in his attempt to do what not even 'the Messiah' has managed to do for 71 years – bring the championship to St James' Park – Dalglish has gone back to Liverpool and recruited two members of the Anfield old guard, Ian Rush and John Barnes, combined age: 68; combined transfer fee: £0. But then Dalglish knows a thing or two about signing players to win championships, and anyway, he may well have a point (although he'll need at least 75 to win it). Which is that, for all the air miles clocked up during the close season, by managers who returned from far flung destinations (i.e., Scandinavia) with the latest 'for, Flo or Frood in tow, the reality is that it often pays to stick with the devil you know rather than the devil you haven't got a clue about, and who could end up costing you an arm and a leg and giving you a sore head in return.

Even if the devils you know are close to drawing their footballing pensions, and couldn't get into the

first teams at Liverpool and Leeds respectively. Look, for example, at Blackburn's Roy Hodgson, who says he "won't be buying any players I don't know, now or in the future"; expect Ewood Park to be brimming with ex-Inter Milan, Switzerland and Bristol City stars by the year 2000. Look, too, at Wim Jansen, whose two major recruits at Celtic have been his former Feyenoord charges Henrik Larsson and Regi Blanke.

Thing is, being a football manager is such a precarious job that you can't really blame those who play it safe. Howard Wilkinson once claimed that "there are only two types of managers: those who've been sacked, and those who'll be sacked in the future"; and it was Wilkinson who, as manager of Leeds, went back to his old club Sheffield Wednesday

Olivia Blair



ON SATURDAY

and relieved them of £1.75m worth of "talent" in Lee Chapman, Nigel Worthington, John Pemberton and Jon Newson.

But Wilko's favouritism pales into insignificance compared to that shown by Roy Aikin to Kevin

Richardson, who is perhaps the palest, skinniest player ever to have played professional football. Cynics will claim BFR's aim was to portray himself as more tamed and omnipotent than he actually is by ensuring Richardson was his constant companion, although the man himself will tell you it was that sweet left foot that did the trick. Whatever the reason, wherever BFR went (to Real Sociedad, Aston Villa and Coventry) Richardson was sure to go.

Quite what Dave "Route One" Bassett saw in Glyn "oo the deck" Hodges is more of a mystery, yet Bassett signed Hodges for Wimbledon, Watford and Sheffield United. Ditto Graham Taylor's preoccupation with Tony Daley. Having already inexplicably – launched Daley's brief England career, Taylor went back to Aston Villa to sign the winger for

Wolves, where he's been equally ineffective. It must have been something in the hair.

Graeme Souness' bond with Barry Venison is more understandable. See, Souness has always been an image man and let's face it, any one's going to look good alongside Barry Venison in post-match press conferences. So having had first hand experience of Barry's dress sense at Liverpool, Souness lured him to Turkey when he took over at Galatasaray, then rescued him when he was the Southampton job.

Gerry Francis' favourite pastime used to be signing his old Bristol Rovers protégés while Mark McGhee is another who has an unashamed tendency for renewing old playing acquaintances (the fans won't have anything to do with him) from his Reading and Leicester days.

But none of these liaisons are as unfathomable as that between Terry Hurlock and Ian Branfoot, who signed the volatile midfielder three times: for Reading, Southampton and Fulham. Dalglish's new signings should make more of an impact, even if the once prolific BFR managed a paltry three goals last season, and the highlight of Barnes' season was that speculative skimmer against Southampton. But if anyone doubts Dalglish's judgment, they'd be as well to recall that Brian Clough, when he became Nottingham Forest manager in 1975, signed some of the players – John McGovern, John O'Hare and Archie Gemmill – who had helped him win the title with Derby in 1972. There was nothing sentimental about it; that wasn't Cloughie's style. No, he was convinced they could do it again. And, inevitably, he was right.

Liverpool aim to find forward gear

Phil Shaw looks for new beginnings in the weekend's Premiership programme

What a strange, staccato season it has been so far. Disrupted by internationals involving not a single Englishman, by Champions' League action featuring a club who last won the championship between the wars, and by a floodlight failure at a new hi-tech stadium, the stop-go start must make the British School of Motoring wish they were sponsoring the Premiership.

For the clubs who had slipped straight into the fast lane, particularly those like Blackburn, West Ham and Leicester who were expected merely to potter along, the snarl-up was as welcome as rush hour on the M6. To the teams spluttering in their wake, notably the Merseyside clubs and Astoria Villa, the period theoretically offered a chance for much-needed retuning.

Not so, the Liverpool manager, Roy Evans, complained yesterday. Far from the break allowing them to regroup after gaining a solitary point from two games, it meant they were "left to stew for 10 days".

Evans' mood might have been better if he had been able to name Robbie Fowler for the first time this season at Blackburn. Fowler aggravated a knee injury in training on Thursday, thus ensuring that attention focuses on his fellow Spice Boy, Steve McManaman, after the

fare of his on-off transfer to Barcelona.

Cautioning against panic, Evans said: "We have to be careful not to rip things apart after one bad game." Yet his readiness to sell McManaman could be interpreted as doing precisely that.

Blackburn have cruised to six points, a total they did not reach until November last season. "It doesn't make us champions," Roy Hodgson said, Rovers' new manager proving he has already mastered the Premier League points system. "Liverpool will be highly motivated. Proper teams prepare properly."

Hodgson added he had tried to persuade the player leading Liverpool today, Paul Ince, to follow him from Internazionale. "Signing him was a realistic possibility, though to some extent we were fooled by the possibility that he'd stay at Inter. Who the move did come, it happened very quickly. It would have been difficult for us to break it then."

It is also reunion time at Goodison Park, where Danny Williamson and David Unsworth are set to make their debuts for Everton and West Ham, each

having started the season in the opposition camp. For a third player facing ex-colleagues, the Croatian centre-back Slaven Bilic, the Hammers that concern him most are sure to be John Hartson and Paul Kitson.

Harry Redknapp's attacking duo have transformed the prospects for West Ham, leaving Howard Kendall envious. "I just hope that whatever partnership we have, of Duncan Ferguson and A N Other, will gel just as well," the Everton manager said.

Although Everton have played only once – losing at home to promoted Crystal Palace – Kendall's problems in attracting top-class recruits have created a mood only victory can dispel.

Villa have used the hiatus to go "back to basics", as Brian Little put it, successive opening losses having forced him to revert to three at the back at Liverpool. Old Boys, aka Newcastle. That, in turn, means Dwight Yorke and Stan Collymore will shed the third member of the strikeforce which was supposed to take the division by storm, Sava Milosevic.

Someoe's 100 per cent records must go as Leicester collide with Manchester United. Martin O'Neill, having beaten two of last year's top five, will not sound plausible should a win over the champions be followed by his customary gratitude for "three more points towards survival".

Ian Wright needs only a single strike at Southampton to equal Cliff Bastin's record of 178 goals for Arsenal. Like Wright, Leeds, at home to Palace, hope to score for the third match running. After netting in only 17 of the 38 fixtures last season – compared with 19 by Wright alone – it would be like George Graham sporting a paisley bandana in the dug-out.

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Meantwhile, a first-day defeat at Coventry for Chelsea's international all-stars, which followed similar surrenders at Leeds, Sunderland, Nottingham and last winter, should encourage Barnsley to believe that they can beat the FA Cup holders and throw off their Premiership "L" plates at Oakwell tomorrow.

Stoke's former striker Mark Stein will be looking for a fresh start now he is back in the First Division. The Chelsea striker, who last played for the Premiership club in November 1995, begins a two-month loan spell with Ipswich at Bradford.

Assistant manager, Viv Anderson, refused to be drawn on the potential pairing of Merson

and Revanelli, but with Clayton Blackmore out with an ankle injury and the defender Vladimir Kunder on World Cup duty with Slovakia, Anderson admits Boro will need their expensive signings to be at their best to beat Stoke.

He said: "Our players had a rude awakening in the first half against Charlton, and Bryan [Robson, the manager] and I were very disappointed with their performance even though we won the game."

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Merson prepares for Boro switch to striker

Nationwide League

Paul Merson may form a potent new front-line combination with Fabrizio Ravanelli as Middlesbrough combat an industrious Stoke side at the Riverside Stadium today.

Merson, a £15m summer signing from Arsenal, forged a role with the Gunners and England as a midfielder playing behind the front two, but he started at Highbury as a striker, scoring 14 goals in their 1989 championship-winning campaign. His skills may be needed to turn around a disappointing start to Boro's First Division campaign.

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IMAGE OF THE WEEK A welcome respite from the scorching sun ... a blanket of fog descends on the beach at St Ives, as paddlers splash their way through the temporary gloom. Picture by David Swanborough using a Canon T90 with a 300mm lens at f11, 1/350th of a second on Kodak Multispeed rated at 640ASA

To order a copy of this picture, for £15, phone 0171 293 2534



the long weekend

THE INDEPENDENT • SATURDAY 23 AUGUST 1997

WORDS OF THE WEEK

The perfect kiss-off: flattery, then the boot

Steven Berkoff, right, has been reading a selection of short stories on Radio 4. This is an extract from 'The Agent', a bleak tale about an actor who cannot find work



sensitive handling and time he deserved. Thus the perfect kiss-off – flattering you while giving you the boot!

However, after a week of phoning and polite, respectful rejections, H came to the conclusion that, although he believed his talents were indeed unique, exceptional and original, they were just not suited for this quotidian world of predictable roles and simplistic characterisations. He was not going to crawl to the third division agents from whence he had begun his arduous climb upwards 30 years ago. No, it would be too ignominious to have one's name in the actor's

directory with your credits listed underneath a third-class agent. This would suggest, by implication, that you, Harry, were a third-class actor! No. Never.

BUT THERE was one agent left who, he had no doubt, would understand his gifts. H had, at various times in the past, considered him. But, like all really good actors, he'd never felt quite ready – or, for that matter, worthy. Now he was considering the possibility once again. Whereas before it had been pure fantasy, and self-dramatisation, circumstances were now gently nudging him to more realistic solutions. He was

demanded on his love and energy, which would temper the single-minded and obsessive drive which the gods demand before their gifts will be bestowed. But he had to admit that his devotion was to a rather tough god. This god was one which reminded him of his father and really had, as yet, rewarded him with nothing except isolation. Perhaps one carries the father patterns like a tape within one, and in some inevitable way constrains one's own rejection.

Consequently, it will be perceived that the agents' neglect of the simple dues of respectful behaviour, which might have earned contempt in a healthy body, opened in Harry a wound a mile wide. Into it flew every doubt he ever had. He felt he was in a void.

But the one agent he had resisted would without doubt take him on to his hooks – as he does eventually with everyone. For no one shall escape him. Being methodical, as befits bachelor actors, H made his will and settled his affairs. Then, in an act that had a touch of theatricality about it, he calmly threw himself under a train at Leicester Square Tube.

IN THE early days his light was seen to shine in some of the major rep. He drew many admirers of his dazzling Petruccio, his satanic Macbeth, his sensitive Richard II.

BUt THE tempest to earn money in long West End runs of thrillers, reduced the glow of somewhat. It was only the lack of more classical roles that made this fall from grace necessary.

ALL THIS explains this devotee's lack of a wife or family. They would have made

INSIDE

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Travel & outdoors



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Namibia and Zimbabwe 10,11
Bank Holiday outings 13
Gardens 14
Sweet sculptures from bees 15



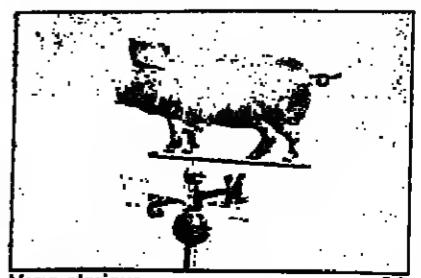
The Agent is repeated tonight at 12.30 am on Radio 4.

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The Bank of England – closed on Monday



Vane-glorious



No rest from mental fight

"I opened as usual with 1.e4, but was rather surprised when he replied with 'nJ5' and told me this was the Go tournament. Thinking quickly, I played T23 and informed him that I had sunk his battleship, which would have been fine if he hadn't passed me the doubling cube and used all his seven letters in forming the word NO-TRUMP on a triple word score. Luckily for me, he fell down a snake the next move and I was back in the game."

At least, I think that was what the man in the Meatloaf T-shirt said as I passed him at the Mind Sports Olympiad at the Royal Festival Hall. Or it may have been half a dozen other chaps in six other T-shirts. Sprawled over six floors of the building, the Mind Sports Olympiad comprises competitions in 39 different games. From well-established international mental sports such as chess, draughts, bridge and backgammon, through the oriental world of Shogi, Go and Chinese Chess, the African Oware (to which the players appear to be absent-mindedly shifting olive stones between cocktail dishes), there is also room for Scrabble, Skat (a card game popular in Germany), Jigsaws, Othello, Rummikub, Speed Reading, memory and IQ tests, and a host of things I had never seen before, with names such as Abalone and Panorama. There is even a Hare & Tortoise competition. My money's on the Tortoise.

With 1,000 entrants signed up before the event began, and another 250 enrolling for

The organisers of the first Mind Sports Olympiad believe that thinking can broaden the mind. William Hartston is not so sure

competitions on the first day, the event has surpassed expectations. Thanks to sponsorship from the Swedish insurance giant Skandia, the total prize fund is over £70,000 with an additional £35,000 in goods.

Organisational, the whole thing appears – perhaps inevitably – rather shambolic. Apart from the medal ceremonies, with their garish trumpet-fanfare-adorned pomp, there was little sign of any co-ordination between the various events. The banners festooned around the building confirmed that everything was part of one unified event, but the only real confirmation was the constant sight of harassed-looking members of the organising committee, either collapsed in the press room or, more often, wandering up and down the stairs taking to each other wearily through doorways. But perhaps the Olympic Games themselves are much the same.

By holding so many events under one roof, and attracting several world champions, even in events that most of us didn't even realise were part of a world championship, the first Mind Sports Olympiad has undoubtedly succeeded in one objective: this is the greatest Games fest ever seen in Britain. But there must be

considerable doubt about whether the event has supported the organisers' underlying beliefs about intellectual games.

The event was the brainchild of Tony Buzan, a lecturer and consultant who runs courses designed to enhance people's mental capacities, and chess grandmaster Raymond Keene. Both have long propagated the view that intellectual games are good for you. "Mens sana in corpore sano," says Buzan whenever he is given the chance. One of those healthily fit-looking 55-year-olds who bound around exuding energy, Buzan maintains that physical and mental fitness go hand in hand. At the Festival Hall this week, however, "mens sana in pot-belly protruding between jeans and T-shirt" might have been a more appropriate motto.

The question is whether playing intellectual games really helps develop the mind for more practical purposes, and the evidence is less clear than the Mind Sports proponents like to believe. Take the world memory champion, Dominic O'Brien, for example, who is hoping to confirm his supremacy in the Memory event at the Olympiad. Able to memorise an entire pack of cards in 40 sec-

onds flat, or a string of some 200 digits, or reel off the answers to all the questions ever seen in Trivial Pursuit, he is clearly a bright chap. Fit, well-dressed and having a wide range of interests, he stands out from the average group of contestants. Having trained himself to perform these prodigious feats of memory, he now does it for a living. And that is the great sorrow of intellectual games.

Just as think of all those great minds battling away on the South Bank – people who are the best in the world at their particular areas of mental expertise. And what do they choose to do with their finely honed minds? They play draughts, remember long strings of digits, and shuffe olive pits.

Why do these fine minds not offer their services to London Underground, to help them put up signs at sensible places in Waterloo station so that people can find their way to the South Bank in the first place? Why do they not design all British Millennium Dome? The answer is that playing games well is not good for you at all. It's playing games badly that helps mental development. Learning a game is mind-stretching, but once you have gained sufficient expertise at chess, bridge or gin rummy, all you're doing is improving your skills in one narrow direction. It's the losers at this Olympiad who deserve the medals.

William Hartston will be giving contestants silly things to do in the Mind Sports Olympiad Creativity competition this morning.

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS JUMBO CROSSWORD

Concise

Across

- 1 Non-violent opposition (7,10)
- 2 Not requiring oxygen (9)
- 3 National quality controllers (7,9,11)
- 4 To do with physicians (6)
- 5 Rare (10)
- 6 More majestic (9)
- 7 Native of southern Spain (10)
- 8 Make up (prescription) (8)
- 9 Cut viciously (7)
- 10 Aridity (7)
- 11 Showing peevish impatience (8)
- 12 Decorator's item (5,5)
- 13 State of serfdom (11)
- 14 Sleevless vest (7)
- 15 Washer to protect electrical wire (7)
- 16 Unit of radiation dose (7)
- 17 Quick (5)
- 18 Canines (3-5)
- 19 Curved supporting structure (4)
- 20 Makes noise of small dog (4)
- 21 Upper-body garment (8)
- 22 Put clothes on (5)
- 23 Native of south-east Asian country (7)
- 24 Touching line (7)
- 25 Wanton damage to property (7)
- 26 Italian national policemen (11)
- 27 Interpretation of charts (3-7)
- 28 Best time (4,4)
- 29 Art using everyday material (7)
- 30 Roaming round (2,5)
- 31 Those who reproduce an event (8)
- 32 Item to fill a deficiency (4-6)
- 33 The hour of the place (5,4)
- 34 Spring items of confectionery (6,4)
- 35 Put up resistance (6)
- 36 Female emergency welfare organisation (5,1,5,9,7)
- 37 Crockery for main meal (6,3)
- 38 As if happening in a fantasy (5,2-10)

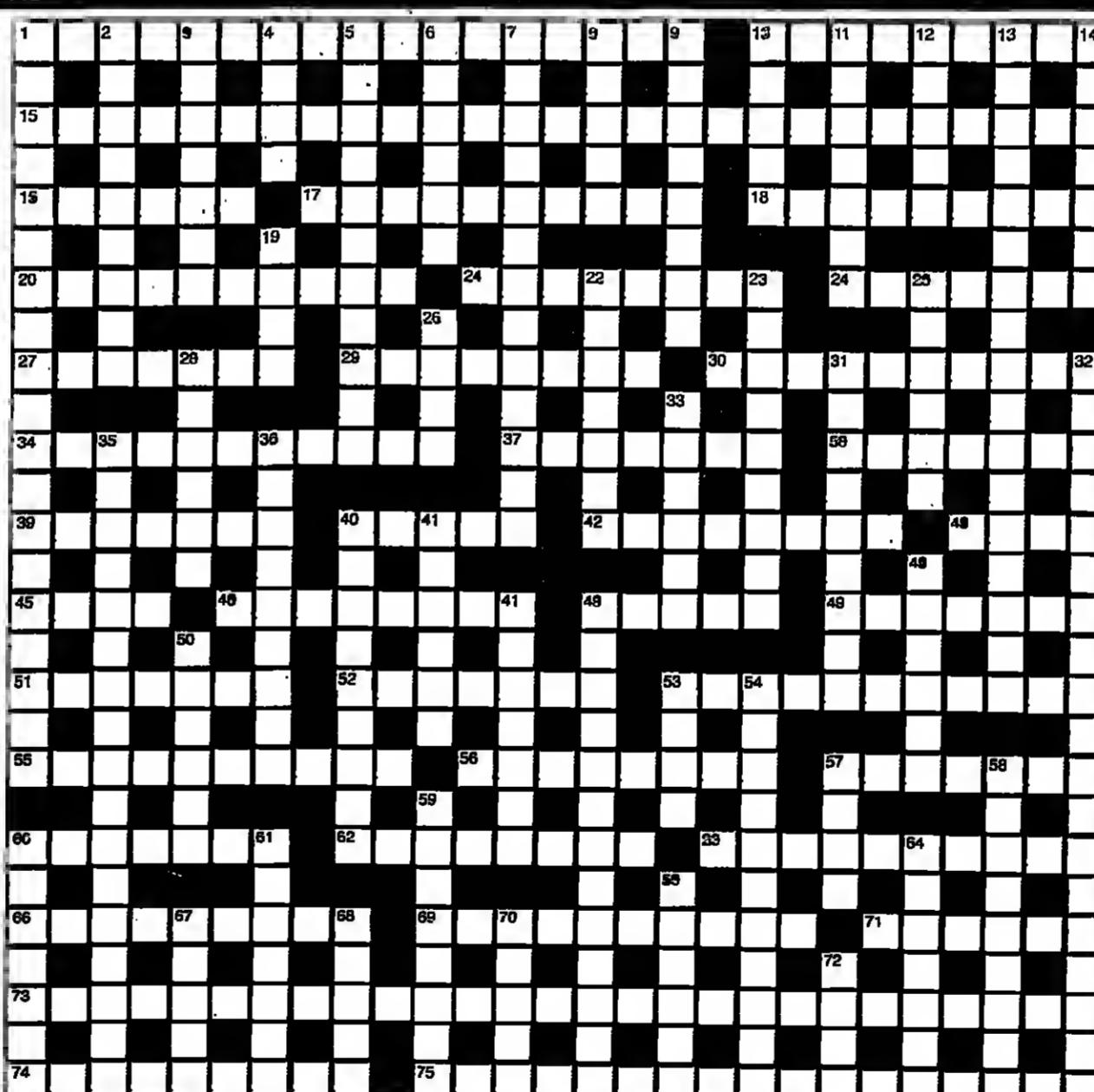
Down

- 1 Tunno, say (6,7,6)
- 2 April 23rd for George? (5,1,3)
- 3 First (7)
- 4 Sound reflection (4)
- 5 Cox or Granny Smith (6,5)
- 6 Take no notice of (6)
- 7 Sedated (13)
- 8 Poke gently (5)
- 9 In being (8)
- 10 Fools (5)
- 11 Beast (7)
- 12 Way from A to B (5)
- 13 It requires clocks to be put forward here (7,6,4)
- 14 Put in middle (7)
- 15 Requests (4)
- 16 Atonement for sin (7)
- 17 Precision (9)
- 18 Ancient name of Great Britain (6)
- 19 Let it stand (4)
- 20 High (6)
- 21 Late place of entertainment (9)
- 22 Do or say exactly the right thing (3,3,4,2,3,4)
- 23 Wool clipped from sheep (6)
- 24 An informal bump on the road (8,9)
- 25 Given for safe-keeping (9)
- 26 Condition of being apt (9)
- 27 Dance or dance tune (6)
- 28 Angle (6)
- 29 Pragmatic person (7)
- 30 Low pressure container glowing from electrical current (9,4)
- 31 A covering (6)
- 32 Manage (4)
- 33 Rabbit-sized marsupial (3-8)
- 34 Change direction (4)
- 35 Italian equivalent of Miss (9)
- 36 Evergreen shrub with rose-like flowers (8)
- 37 Permitted (7)
- 38 People who move to another country (7)
- 39 Nero, say (7)
- 40 Scientist of gravity (6)
- 41 Thrust forward (5)
- 42 Middle-eastern country (5)
- 43 Finland (5)
- 44 Manipulated (4)
- 45 submissive state? (8)
- 46 Makes nice arrangement of leaves (4,3)
- 47 Leg failing? Your walking won't then be this (2-5)
- 48 Spitting the beans on former spouse acting as model (8)
- 49 Former Royal name for wood and hill in South Africa (10)
- 50 As meeting is bed formulates a puzzle (11)
- 51 Note TV company's nerve-centres (7)
- 52 Here's nothing to restrict what one thinks? (7)
- 53 Apt site for making pies (7)
- 54 Journalists having no drink to keep down (5)
- 55 Cry of surprise cleared other ranks from the passage (8)
- 56 cause of the day? (8)
- 57 Blades cut head off swine (4)
- 58 Victory in Europe secured by one bringing ashore sweet-smelling plant (8)
- 59 Artist to lible cruelly, suppressing natural response (10)
- 60 Perhaps the day of the psychiatrist is in decline? (9)
- 61 Cotitutes changes to second scientific study (10)
- 62 Asian person returns greeting in Italian port (6)
- 63 Honour for chap doing out pub spirit measures? (7,9,11)
- 64 Give in on French regicide? (9)
- 65 Perhaps Capability Brown comes ashore on headland with Adam? (9,8)
- 66 Hungry to participate to capture South American port (5)
- 67 Yet a minimal price for service (8)
- 68 Wandering nomad spirit (5)
- 69 Opposes island getting swamped in holidays (7)
- 70 A right order to a distinctive fragrance (5)

Cryptic

Across

- 1 Give too much for inspired salary? (3,7,3,4)
- 2 One catching fish in the sea finds answer in amalgamation (9)
- 3 Make normal use of tobacco there! (3,4,2,4,4,3,5,2)
- 4 Old German chemist gives story considerable backing (6)
- 5 Sporting types retain an impression of the plaus (10)
- 6 Demolish underworld person's status (9)
- 7 Old car worker is exultant (1,0)
- 8 Was monarch keeping Sabbath in a



Down

- 1 Bang goes the planet with this? (10,9)
- 2 Treaty is changed in good exchanges of little consequence (9)
- 3 An unnatural element of overacting involving one Hun's portrayal (7)
- 4 Hated to get led away, it's a curse (4)
- 5 Comfortable over stays of Wild West characters? (11)
- 6 Drying cloth about right for garden implement (6)
- 7 Mistreated computer gives these signals indicating one's human? (5,8)
- 8 Hunter willing to participate to capture South American port (5)
- 9 Yet a minimal price for service (8)
- 10 Wandering nomad spirit (5)
- 11 Opposes island getting swamped in holidays (7)
- 12 A right order to a distinctive fragrance (5)

How to enter

The first correct cryptic solution will win the *Oxford Companion to British History, English Literature and English Language*. The first six cryptic runners-up and the first six concise runners-up will each receive a copy of *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*. Mark entries "Concise Jumbo" or "Cryptic Jumbo" and send them to PO Box 4015, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL. Entries to arrive by noon on Thursday, 4 September. Solutions and winners' names will appear on Saturday, 6 September.

For the weather, traffic reports, the sky at night, and Damien Hirst the cartoon sage of artistic angst ... TURN TO PAGE 25

Games people play

Pandora Melly learns to catch old ladies with rum

Alexander Thynn, Marquess of Bath, 63, writer and painter

Butterfly-collecting has died out completely. It was once a passion in my life and, for a teenager, I had a very good collection. Recently I fund a letter home in which I said I'd just caught an old lady. I remember my mother's bewilderment because she didn't realise that old ladies are moths, which is not usual for every mother to know.

There was a butterfly-collecting fraternity at school. The others called us the Buggers, but we would have preferred if they had called us entomologists. We made night excursions and sugared the trees to catch moths. You mix treacle and rum and smear it on the bark, and the moths smell it from a long way away, and come and eat it. Once they've had a bit of rum, they become dopey, and you don't have to run very fast to catch them. Drunken moths. Rum is the secret of all the glories.

I know that butterfly-collecting is often held up as a symbol of something sinister: if you go stalking after butterflies, you must be a stalker; but I don't think we thought of it like that. It was more for the love of nature; an excuse to be walking around the woods and making a collection of the beautiful things you see when you go on walks. A butterfly collection is a reminder of those hours spent strolling through nature.

When I took my English butterflies to France to add to my French collection, some horrible little mites got in, and my butterflies became a big banquet for them. It looked so miserable to leave a lot of bodiless wings in a box, so I'm afraid

Backgammon Chris Bray

A pea-souper had descended on London and it was oddly quiet in our rooms in Baker Street. Holmes mused before a roaring fire, apparently oblivious to all around him.

"Holmes, I wonder if I may venture a question on your favourite game?"

"By all means, Watson. My case load contains nothing of great moment, so what better way to spend an evening?"

"I have noticed that when I play my pace is constant. I roll the dice, study the candidate moves as you have taught me, make my selection and move my men. Yet when I watch you, I notice that you play some moves with no apparent thought, whilst others take a considerable time. You take the longest time of all when dealing with cube decisions."

"Ah, Watson," replied the great detective, "you have hit upon a key factor of successful backgammon. You cannot play like an automaton. This is a highly complex game even to someone of my intellect. It is true that there are positions where the difference in equity between two possible moves is minute. For example the play of a '1' in a bear-off. In such instances I will often move quickly and conserve my mental energy for the more difficult decisions. Playing top-class backgammon is very tiring and you should not expend energy needlessly."

"On many moves my choice may affect the type of game that will result; on others there may well be a huge equity difference between two candidates. In these situations I will take the time to apply my knowledge and techniques to make sure that I make the right choice more often than not. Even great players are said to make the best move only 80 per cent of the time and my research shows that even this estimate may be too high. As for doubling, look at it this way. In a game you may make 30 moves but you are likely to have to make no more than two doubling cube decisions. It is therefore worth investing the time to evaluate the position accurately. As I have told you before, the largest errors made when moving the men do not begin to equal the equity give away by bad cube decisions."

"Thank you, Holmes. As ever, a lucid explanation."

"Rudimentary, my dear Watson."

The usual Saturday Games Page concise crossword, chess, bridge and perplexity features will return next week.

The pass master



John Walsh
talks to
MAGNUS MAGNUSSON

The black executioner's chair, now resting in Magnus Magnusson's Glasgow home, is smaller than you'd expect, its creased leather worn to a chamois softness from the 1,400-odd quaking bottoms that have sat on it over the 25 years of *Mastermind*. Look, I said, the arm-rests have become all silvered and pitted because of all the straining, sweaty hands that have clutched them in agonies of information-retrieval... "No no," said Magnusson equably, "that's because the metal supports have become loosened from all its journeys across the UK. It's just normal wear and tear."

Or blast. Any fan of the BBC's most legendarily challenging quiz show would prefer to believe in the chair's iconic status as a torture victim's throne than in the boring reality. Despite Magnus's cheery, off-camera warm-up cry to contenders that "it's only a bloody game", a considerable army of job-frustrated show-offs, pub-quiz colossi and chenille-skirted know-all have come to regard *Mastermind* as the ultimate arena of intelligence on display - the Star Chamber where their knowledge of Byzantine ceramics, their weird, hermitic familiarity with the life of Pope Innocent III will allow them to make the transition from sad, fact-harbouring bore to nationally renowned intellectual giant.

In a couple of weeks, the great quiz will be history, its doomy signature-tune ("Approaching Menace" by Neil Richardson) will be heard no more, its Caithness Glass rose-bowl trophies become collectors' items at posh car-boot sales, and its patrician, Scots-Icelandic inquisitor will be looking for something else to occupy his spare time.

The chair, with its sternly functional lines, looks out of place in Magnusson's handsome *hau-bourgeois* living-room. There's a long comfy sofa, accessorised by its owner's pipe and tartan slippers. On the walls, several oil paintings suggestive of elemental disarray - Mayhill trains in the rain, a stormy landscape of windswept Scandinavian barns, an Auerbach-ist portrait - loom over the figure of Magnusson's sweet grandson, Magnus *mirinus*, his daughter Sally's youngest child, as he plunks along the family grand piano and goes in search of chocolate bourbons. Magnus *maximus*, now 67, proudly, displays his accumulated glassware; an Irish lead crystal rendering of the famous chair, a rose bowl of his very own from the Caithness craftsmen, and a jar of sweets from a neighbour, its cotton lid embroidered with the words: "Magnus. I started 1972. I finished 1997."

The great man is too busy for comfort today, distracted by a clamour of ringing telephones, photographers, a flock of media-circus buzzards alerted by both the demise of *Mastermind* and the launch of a history of the show by Magnusson himself (published on 4 September). He is charming and funny throughout, however, patiently rehearsing anecdotes, recalling names and scores and passes with the utmost interest, as if it were his whole life. Which it isn't, of course, as you can see from his *Who's Who* entry: you need a jeweller's lens to find the single mention of *Mastermind* amid the flood of popular history books (on Iceland, Scotland and Ireland), archaeology works and *belle-lettres* (*Strange Stories, Amazing Facts, Pass the Port*), not to mention the dozen translations from Icelandic sagas, the umpteen "contributions" and "introductions" to other books, the university fellowships and honorary degrees and dignified committees he's chaired in his busy life. Did he care that all this eclectic achievement was overshadowed by *Mastermind*?

"It's eclipsed the other things as far as the general public is concerned," he said, in that judicious and trustworthy Scots burr. "But before I did *Mastermind*, I was doing very worthy and earnest work on *Chronicle* [the popular archaeology show he wrote and presented from 1966 to 1981] which was, I thought, extremely important and very rewarding. I was distilling all the knowledge provided by good academics into a more popular and accessible form, and it took me all over the world, meeting people. *Mastermind* started purely as a sideline, a little earner and a welcome one, with five children on the go, school fees and mortgages, the full catastrophe."

The idea of the steely-eyed, rat-jawed guy is not terribly me... I'm a terrible old softie'

I wondered about the image of the inquisitor he so endearingly holds in the public mind, the silkenly courteous, potentially ruthless, when-did-you-last-see-your-father? magistrate-cum-Gestapo-officer, asking people things relentlessly, out of the darkness. "That was an image I was required to foster in the early series. I was actually called the Interrogator in the credits. But the curt, laconic delivery 'Correct', 'Nope' - was simply a function of the speed required to get through as many questions as possible. And the idea of the steely-eyed, rat-jawed guy is not terribly me. The contenders all say 'I'm a terrible old softie. I liked them all, you see. And although the programme, in its presentation, relies on a melodramatic situation they knew I wasn't there to trip them up.'

The highest-ever score was 41, achieved in 1995 by Kevin Ashman, a civil servant from Winchester (special subject: Dr Martin Luther King Jr and the Civil Rights Movement). "His score was theoretically impossible," said Magnusson. "Because I time all the questions and answers at studio speed with a stopwatch, and there should be time for exactly 20 questions in each round, if the answers are prompt and accurate. But some people, like Ashman, are so bloody fast, they do the impossible..." Magnusson displays a kind of benevolent awe about others of his charges. "Jennifer Keaveney," he said wonderingly, "who scored 40 in 1986, was an absolute automaton. While she was answering, she switched into some computer mode, completely

deadpan. I noticed when I shook her hand afterwards it was ice-cold, as if she'd become a shaman... And there was Mary-Elizabeth Raw, the vet in the wheelchair, who had entered, as much as anything, to prove that disableness did not affect your mind. She wanted to win very badly indeed, and to score 40 was a colossal triumph of the will."

I reminded him of the downfall of Susan Reynolds, which, like 10 million others, I watched, horrified, in 1974: an Oxford classics student with the face of a Dresden shepherdess, she sailed through the heats (special subject: "Greek Mythology"), hummed through the semi-final ("The Works of Richard Wagner") and entered the final taking "British Ornithology" as her subject. Disaster struck. Due to a fit of amnesia, panic attack or hubris, she couldn't answer any questions about birds. As she whispered "Pass" again and again in a sad little mantra, Magnus said, in his kindly way, "Do try to answer some of these..." and the country collectively wept for her. "It emerged later that she'd had an accident that afternoon, and was hit by the wardrobe door in her hotel room," said Magnusson. "There was a great bruise on her forehead, hidden by make-up. And I have a theory that she'd chosen the wrong aspect of her subject - she knew all about Bird Identification, but I suppose she thought Ornithology sounded posher..."

He really does seem to have total recall of this quarter-century of faces, this Niagara of questions, this blizzard of facts. The book, *I've Started So I'll*

Finish, is beguilingly crammed with good stories, especially the moments of Magnusson's fluffs and bolshie questions ("The solanaceous plant *Lycopersicum esculentum* is a genus of which tomato?"). There's the lady contender who was taking Valium to calm her nerves and got plastered on two glasses of sherry, and the Beethoven expert who strode off the set in exasperation when his answers weren't accepted ("We were terribly slack in those days; we wouldn't dream of checking the special-subject questions..."). Hadn't he fallen out with some of them? "I took a quite irrational dislike to one man, who came on with a dog-collar, called himself the Reverend Robert Peters from some theological college. I found him insufferably arrogant. The day after his appearance, people started saying he was some kind of imposter. Then the *News of the World* exposed him. He was an Anglican vicar, who'd been unfrocked for bigamy, had gone to New Zealand and married again, so he was a trigamist, and had returned to England with his gorgeous new wife." What was his subject? "The Life and Times of Archbishop William Temple. He didn't do very well," Magnusson noted with grim satisfaction.

The quiz-master sometimes gives the impression of believing his own image as the fount of all knowledge. Unbelievably, people often ring him at home to ask him the capital of South Dakota or what won the Grand National in 1933, and he has a sneaky way of asking his interlocutors what they know. "Most of the answers go by in a blur, unless it's

a subject that interests me, like history or archaeology. But some things stick - like when I learn the meaning of the word 'shibboleth'..."

He cocked an interrogative eyebrow at me.

"You mean a password or rallying cry?" "Yes, but what's *really* interesting is..." The eye-brow lifted again. I seemed to be taking part in some test. "...Is that it?" Is that it? The Old Hebrew word for an ear of corn and, in the war between the Gileadites and the Ephraimites, was used as a password for detecting infiltrators because, if asked to say the word out loud, the Ephraimites invariably pronounced it "skibboleth"?

Magnusson looked at me. "Well done," he said shortly. "You're the only person who's been able to answer that." I later learnt it's indeed a little test he gives interviewers.

Did he think memory had much to do with intelligence? "I think memory is a factor in intelligence, certainly. If your retrieval system is good, then your intelligence can flourish more." Did he think the concept of "general knowledge" had become a little moth-eaten? "No, I think the enjoyment of knowledge is still there, as you can see from the growth in pub quizzes. You may call it 'trivia', but it's just as important to people as darts and they take it as seriously. I think there's a constant celebration of what you can do inside your head, and *Mastermind* reflected this interest and promoted it as well."

Almost unnoticed, Magnusson has slipped into committee-speak, an idiom with which he is very familiar. His chairmanship of Scottish Natural Heritage, which runs out in 1999 (when I'm 70, the century's over and, as with *Mastermind*, it's the right time to make a graceful exit) is a bureaucratic chore he takes very seriously. Their remit is "to look after and enhance the natural heritage of Scotland and aid its enjoyment and understanding", while briefing the Secretary of State for Scotland on gripping matters of soil erosion, designated areas and scheme facilities. Magnusson's voice drops below his habitual low purr when talking of such things, until you fear we both may fall asleep; but he is reanimated passionately by the subject of birds.

He worries about how to protect the rare Greenland white-fronted geese who have moved en masse to Islay. He's concerned about the repercussions of the Common Agricultural Policy on the corn hunting and skylark. He notes that the corncrake, once to be seen in the streets of Edinburgh, "has been driven into the last bastion of the Western Isles. Although the figures are beginning to go up - there were a hundred calling males recorded last year..." Gosh. Was he a twitcher? "No, no." But you sound so... "Well I love 'em. At school I started a Bird Watchers' Society, now called the Ornithology Society." [he chuckles. We seem to be back in Susan Reynolds territory]. I won the Public Schools Essay Competition when I was a wee ladie writing about birds." The title? "I was on the mating rituals of blackbirds. In March and April, I used to cycle down to some woods before school, and there one day I saw this ring of male blackbirds with a female in the middle. I couldn't find any reference to it in bird books, so I wrote about my observations and it was later confirmed that that's what blackbirds do."

He has a thing about badgers too. And archaeological sites (his recreations, according to *Who's Who*, are "digging and delving"). And derivations, both of words and family names ("the name Magnus comes from Charlemagne, 'Carolus Magnus' you see, though the first Magnus was the son of St Olaf of Norway..."). And women. Stories of a mildly scandalous nature have long accrued around Magnusson's saintly snow-white bonce. One publishing lady took him to lunch to discuss the publicity schedule of his new book and was startled when he interrupted her, placed an avuncular hand on her arm and breathed, "It's OK. I've booked a room where we can go and make love..." "I don't remember that at all," says Magnusson with a delighted laugh. "If I did, it was probably winding her up."

There is a decidedly skittish streak about this Establishment figure, a touch of the Viking lurking inside his quiz-master sobriety. He was once invited on to Radio 4's *Any Questions*. The first question was about the safest way to keep football hooligans penned in without danger. Magnusson suggested wiring up their chairs and running an electrical current through them if they misbehaved. "I just thought it needed a bit of irony amid all the earnest stuff," he says. "But they didn't ask me again..." When you ask him what's in store, what new career he can embark on at 67, it's good to hear that he's not settling for writing books in retirement and tartan slippers. "What I'd most like to do now is a TV series on the *Odyssey*, in 24 parts, showing where Nestor's Palace was." Yes that seems an appropriate place for this restless but reassuring figure to end up - bringin an epic down to manageable proportions for ordinary people to enjoy. And just imagine the interviews: "Name?" "Cyclops." "Occupation?" "Giant." "Your special subject?" "Eating sailors." "Your two minutes start... now."

Meet Deep Brown, my Couchagotchi

Mark Little on one man's struggle to bring a little added velour to the Festival Fringe

Art's a funny game. Performance art's even funnier. But when you're talkin' alternative performance art at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, crank up the weirdness. Not that I'm saying there are a lot of weird people

performing in Edinburgh this year, quite the contrary. Most everyone I've met from Spain, Scotland, Australia, America, New Zealand, Wales, Africa or wherever have been really down-to-earth, sweet folks. Bung them all in the one town, though, for three weeks, with nothing to do but perform and party, and it gets weird enough. Just the way I like it, of course, and one of the reasons I keep coming back.

I travel to Edinburgh this year with my own little piece of performance madness called

Psychobubble, the most freeform and dangerous show I've attempted in a long time. (I haven't been so excited about what is possible on the alternative comedy stage since

pre-Neighbours Melbourne in the mid-1980s.)

At the very centre of this whirlwind

of comic energy I have a couch - an ugly Mock-Crock velour settee that

basically constitutes my set. It is,

it?" I asked. "Sure," said the bloke. "I just need to see if I can dance with it." "OK," he nodded. "Do you mind if I just take it on the pavement to make sure I can get under it?"

No reply. Just a stare, as I flipped it over and

upturned the big brown

biggger on top of me. £45

he wanted. He got it and I

gained a virtual friend.

My "Couchagotchi".

Rehearsals went

smoothly and, apart from

one embarrassing

moment when my wife

caught me talking to myself under the couch in the conservatory, I was happy.

Time to test the couch rescue.

I took the couch - which I had now

given artificial intelligence and

renamed Deep Brown - along to the

Bolshoi Circus tent during the

Brighton Festival. I took it along to the Battersea Arts Centre in South London.

I found, though, that I

couldn't just leave it lying

around like a couch

because people just used

it like a couch. At the

Battersea Arts Centre it

turned into a props table

for some extremely

alternative cabaret. I was

quietly upset. This was

my friend. This was

weird.

I stood it upright and

attached a sign.

THIS IS DEEP BROWN, THE

COUCHAGOTCHI

BIOLOGICALLY ENGINEERED

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE.

DO NOT DISTURB AS THIS

COULD RESULT IN DEATH.

AND NO ONE WANTS TO SIT ON A DEAD COUCH.

London went well. "The Couch" was well reviewed in the press. So was I. We were happy.

Off to Edinburgh. No one seemed to

want to ship my couch up North for me.

"I'll take it myself," I thought. "I want

to be with it."

The whole family were going. My wife

and two kids and me. Everywhere we

looked, families were going on holidays.

Cars stacked up with holiday necessities.

Everyone seemed to have tents,

surfboards, bikes, major

implements of holiday fun strapped to

the roofs of their cars. Except us. We

had "The Couch". My wife

were understanding and the ropes were tight.

I got my "friend" to Edinburgh without

it being blown off the roof and killing

anyone on the MI (my main fear).

The couch is now starring on the

Edinburgh Fringe. For the first four minutes of my show, that's all you get, a talking upturned couch. It gets a good response and a couple of rounds of applause (which makes me think the shows these people have already seen must have been real rubbish). Yet of course, off-stage, Deep Brown is still just a couch. Success has not spoilt it.

I have now learnt to share my "virtual friend". So far the bloke who plays Richard Burton has had a sleep on it. So has the freak who licks stuff with his genitalia. Assorted hard stage crew have crashed on it. Paul Morrocco and Ole have crashed into it and Mika, the Maori cabaret sensation, has avoided it.

The Edinburgh Festival is a spectacle and I truly recommend a visit. But he warned: the special weirdness that is this festival can have you loving performance art you would not normally go and see. I personally know of crowds who've thrived to an ugly upturned couch. Edinburgh Festival. Glad to be here, hope to be back.

Mark Little's *Psychobubble* is at the Assembly Rooms, venue 3 (0131-226 2428) 8.25pm tonight. He can also be seen hosting Channel 4's <

Inaction man

Chris Darke celebrates the ambiguous on-screen persona of Alain Delon, French cinema's most impassive star

As the French film journal *Cahiers du cinéma* pointed out in a lengthy interview with Alain Delon published last April, the actor's surname is an anagram of *le don* - "the gift". And the gift that set Delon apart during the Sixties is now once again on display, thanks to the re-release of René Clément's 1960 film *Plain Soleil*. An adaptation of Patricia Highsmith's novel *The Talented Mr Ripley*, in which Delon plays the seductively sociopathic anti-hero, *Plain Soleil* was Delon's breakthrough film. Before it, he had been identified, along with Jean-Paul Belmondo, as an up-and-coming *jeune premier* (leading man) of the French cinema and, in his early career, he had adorned a number of lightweight romantic comedies. In the same year as *Plain Soleil* appeared, Belmondo went on to shoot *A bout de souffle* with Jean-Luc Godard and found himself transformed into an *auteur* of the French New Wave. Delon would never be as directly associated with that explosive moment of cinematic creativity as Belmondo, but with *Plain Soleil* his international career was assured. Clément's film revealed Delon in his coldly angelic prime, capturing that quality of ambiguity that was to define the actor's persona for the rest of his career and that so admirably suited this Highsmith adaptation.

The novel's hero, Tom Ripley, has been entrusted with the task of bringing Philippe Greenleaf (Maurice Roote), the errant son of a wealthy American father, back home from Italy. Moving between Rome and the Amalfi coast, the action opens with Ripley impressing Greenleaf with his talent for forging signatures. It's a skill that grows into a fully fledged and deadly imposture: Ripley murders Greenleaf and assumes his identity. His intention is to harvest the dead man's wealth as well as his girlfriend, Marge (Marie Laforet).

Delon plays Ripley as a purely reflexive schemer, shading his character so that the desired outcome of Ripley's subterfuge - easy access to the idle-rich lifestyle - seems only slightly less important than acquitting himself elegantly in the game of deceit. But there's an ugly edge here, too. It's something hinted at by the American critic Donald Lyons, who wrote that the film "posits, in a coyly Nietzschean way, the right of beauty to legislate its own existence". And if that includes rubbing out

a few of the less beautiful people, then so be it. *Beauté oblige*.

There's also a sense in which, in his rapt concentration on his star, Clément seems almost to be endorsing this quasi-fascistic identification with Ripley the *übermensch*. Perhaps that explains why, at the end of the film, Delon gets his come-uppance, whereas Highsmith's novel lets Ripley get away with it.

In many ways, *Plain Soleil* reads like a documentary about Delon, both a heady observation of a gifted screevo animal and a closely choreographed hallel of dissimulating gestures and movements. Delon here has a physical presence and dynamism that are compelling to watch; it is respect that the film is a study of on-screen grace.

Throughout his career, Delon remained unshaken in his praise of Clément, calling him "his master". He has described how Clément directed him on *Plain Soleil*: "He showed me the sea and said, 'Go on, throw yourself about. Move!' He manipulated me like a marionette." But, beneath the athleticism of his performance, there is a stillness, a watchfulness that make Delon's Ripley an enigma.

This combination would be reprised throughout his career, frequently under the guidance of major *auteur* puppet-masters. There would be his association with Visconti on *Rocco and His Brothers* (1960) and *The Leopard* (1963); with Antonioni on *The Eclipse* (1962), where Delon's perturbing dynamism is at odds with the usual anguish of the Italian director's male characters; with Joseph Losey on *The Assassination of Trotsky* (1972) and *My Name is Kline* (1976); above all, with the great French thriller director Jean-Pierre Melville.

Delon made three films with Melville, including the seminal *Le Samouraï* of 1967, in which Delon's performance as the hired killer Jeff Costello attains an almost Zen-like stillness. Both *Plain Soleil* and *Le Samouraï* are "procedural" films, in that they are both obsessed with the preparation and execution of crimes, but Melville abstracted all but the most glacial element of Delon's menace and did so to tremendous iconic effect.

Delon's quality of tough-guy stillness is often summed up by the short-hand description "laconic" - for which read "Say little, do less". And it's true that he shares qualities with both Robert Mitchum and John Garfield (Delon has spoken of Garfield as "his model") as well as with

a more immediate peer in Jean-Louis Trintignant - always more an "actor" than a "star" in France but still distinguishing himself in the same territory of cold-eyed misanthropy.

Delon's persona has been crystallised by well-publicised associations that have played up the element of menace in his on-screen performances. In 1969 he was implicated in a drugs scandal and admitted to having been involved with the Marseilles mafia, whose past he mythologised (alongside Belmondo) in the hugely successful historical crime caper *Borsalino* (1970). Theo there's his background seen as "myth" - those details of a past that stars will deliberately emphasise to enhance their image. Delon's is an interesting one. "I fell into cinema," he has said. He'd been a parachutist in Indo-China at the age of 18, trained as a boxer for *Rocco and His Brothers*, remains a vocal friend of the Gaulois right-wing and makes no secret of his admiration for the military. It's this mixture of individualist and adventurer, with a strong authoritarian streak, that he capitalised upon throughout the 1970s in a series of frequently self-produced cop films.

Plain Soleil is not normally considered as a New Wave film. In fact, Clément himself was regarded by the New Wave as a prime exponent of "le cinéma de papa", a derisive epithet for the 1950s style of French movie-making, with its devotion to the virtues of solid craftsmanship and literary source texts. It was against this perceivedly moribund establishment that the New Wavers declared Oedipal war. Yet it was clear that, with *Plain Soleil*, Clément wanted in. This may have been the reflex of a director smart enough to notice the tide turning and deciding to surf the new currents. But in his use of cinematographer Henri Decaë, who shot Truffaut's 1959 break-through film *Les Quatre Cents Coups*, and of Paul Gégauff, Claude Chabrol's script collaborator, as his co-screenwriter, Clément declared his desire to be part of the new French cinema. And, in casting Delon, who was still something of a new face at the time, he found his equivalent to Belmondo.

While Clément's film has none of the freewheeling, experimental joy that the New Wave directors demonstrated, there's a kind of kinship between the characters of Belmondo's Michel Poicard in Godard's *A bout de souffle* and Delon's Ripley in *Plain Soleil*. Both are early Sixties



Alain Delon in his 'coldly angelic prime' as the seductively sociopathic hero of *Plain Soleil*

images of young men who are prepared to go all the way to get what they want. Both films are intrigued by the existential consequences of this will-to-power and both, in the traditional French *noir* scheme of things, have their anti-heroes pay for their ambitions. Henri Decaë's Eastmancolor cinematography gives Clément's film a texture that, viewed today, is as immersively colourful as a 1960s picture postcard. Pastery, again. A simulacrum without shadow, the perfect frame in which to claustrophobically depict a criminal at work.

Delon's career since his Sixties heyday has looked increasingly like a balancing act between maintaining his status as mainstream *vedette* and continuing to diversify with appearances in *auteur* films. An attempt at a Hollywood career in the mid-1960s yielded unspectacular results and his European career founded in the 1980s. An attempt at a comeback with the 1992 film *Le Retour de Casanova* (The Return of Casanova), in which Delon starred as the ageing Italian roué, failed to attract audiences on the strength of his name alone. Curiously enough, it was Delon's long-awaited collaboration with a former New Wave director, Jean-Luc Godard, in *Nouvelle Vague* (1990) that gives the best account of late-period Delon. And Godard, as is his habit, quotes freely from *Plain Soleil* in his own film's motif of death by drowning and in Delon's character of an ambiguous interloper among a group of wealthy business people.

"I wanted to film Delon as if he was a tree," Godard has explained. The commanding stillness of the Delon persona is still on view in *Nouvelle Vague* but is layered now with melancholy and the sense of a man internally exiled through his own narcissism.

'Plain Soleil' is now showing in London at the Screen on the Green (0171-226 3520), the Everyman (0171-435 1525) and the Curzon Phoenix (0171-369 1721)

EDINBURGH FESTIVAL REVIEWS

Opera

Ariadne auf Naxos

"**L**et's hope the opera nonsense doesn't get bashed up," exclaims M Jourdain, Molière's bourgeois anti-hero, as a performance of Richard Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos* is planned.

Scottish Opera has chosen to stage the original 1912 version of this amazing piece, which is thus preceded by *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*, performed by actors in a free translation - free is the word - by Jeremy Sams. This form of the work has seldom been seen; the difficulty of assembling two companies, drama and opera, for its performance led Strauss and Hofmannsthal to revise it in 1916, removing the Molière play, and that is the version we all know.

To hear the original is a revelation. Its chief feature is the greater integration of comic and serious, representation and "real life", vulgarity and sophistication. Sams's racy translation of the play stressed this. Suddenly one finds that the work has the irony, the levels of meaning, the mixture of art and life one expects in a Mahler symphony.

The new production is witty and lavish, full of clever sight-gags and elaborate props. Martin Duncan, the director, and Tim Hatley, the designer, have set it in more-or-less modern times, though the operatic characters are in white-classical and the *commedia* figures are a cross between minstrel show and cabaret. The illusion of an expensive drawing-room gives way gradually to a baroque stage, full of painted clouds and dry ice.

The piece has one outstanding problem, which may have encouraged its revision. It is too long. Sams even puts in a bit of repartee about the composer being "a surgeon, who makes cuts for the health of the whole body". Well, he is right; it needs to be an hour shorter.

But it certainly deserves to be seen. As well as real comic actors - Sam Kelly is a droll Jourdain - there is an ideal cast of singers, including a real Zerbini. This is one of the hardest roles to cast in all opera, for it has spine-tickling coloratura, sympathy and

pathos, and it needs a dancer and comedian as well. Lisa Saffer has everything, and also looks terrific. She almost steals the show from the Ariadne, Anne Evans, who sings heroically, sculpturally, transplanting her famous Bayreuth Brünnhilde into the role.

The adroit integration of comedy and epic is chiefly accomplished by the conducting of Richard Armstrong. He animates without hurrying, broadens without dragging,

Dance

San Francisco Ballet

The Playhouse audience was practically steaming with excitement before the curtain went up on San Francisco Ballet on Tuesday. They haven't danced in Britain since 1981 and 16 years is a long time in a company's life. Many changes have been wrought in the interim.

San Francisco's ballet com-

pany was founded in 1933 and is the oldest professional ballet outfit in the US. It has had its ups and downs - artistically and financially - but in 1985 the former New York City Ballet principal Helgi Tomasson took over as artistic director. Since then they have enjoyed rave reviews for their strong technique and wide and handsome repertoire. Unfortunately, the works selected to showcase the company in Edinburgh did not always do his achievements justice.

Of the two programmes on offer the first, with its two Balanchine, was by far the more popular and (for once) box-office instincts proved to be correct. It opened with the 1972 *Stravinsky Violin Concerto*. The many jumps are dashed off with so little fuss and preparation that the dancers seem to have been jerked from the floor by a length of elastic. The evening closed with

1947's *Symphony in C*, which provoked the usual squeak of excitement when the audience got its first glimpse of 10 shimmering white tutus. Further thrills were generated by Yuan Yuan Tan in the adagio. Remarkable extensions and commanding balances contributed to a brilliant (if slightly inexpressive) performance.

The stale filling in this gourmet sandwich was Helgi Tomasson's *Sonata*, danced to Rachmaninov's soulful *Sonata*

for Piano, Trumpet and Strings. Bintley's theme is too big for him but his treatment of it never crass. He draws a parallel between the grassy nature of flesh and the short life of the professional dancer. At the ballet's close, Death takes a class and the dancers struggle to copy his swift *enchainements* before dropping to the floor.

The second programme's highlight is Mark Morris's *Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes*, created for American Ballet Theatre in 1988 and danced to Virgil Thomson's *Piano Etudes*. Morris's easy, unravelling turns and casually brilliant *jeux* are a sunny manifestation of the fractured gaiety of the music. The stage is filled with couples propelled by a curious sense of purpose - as if every rush across the stage is a short-cut to a better place. The San Francisco dancers handled Mark Morris very well but they were obviously just visiting; with Balanchine, they seemed more comfortably at home.

Louise Levene

rapid dramatic version of the parlor game *Consequences*, with the characters constantly cutting back to the beginning and then supplying wildly different endings. At first you think you're in for a reinvention of *l'opéra-comique* absurdity as the family indulge in soap opera argy bargy, but things turn increasingly surreal. One minute the audience is rocking with laughter at the sudden plunge into *Agatha Christie* - it's nothing to do with any of us except that the body was found in our garden - the next, you're shocked into silence as the usually bouncy, hale Mary Macleod, as the elderly Maisie, chillingly reveals the terror of waking up in the night afraid of dying.

The second half refracts and dislocates language in exactly the same way the first part does to action. A tiny shock jumps through the audience as Jason Watkins, as Derek, appears to trip over a word, substituting "blue" for "start". Then the word "kettle" crops up unannounced. Gradually, these two words creep in and consume the dialogue to the point of almost complete breakdown.

These dramatic devices could be dismissed as a typically barren exercise in deconstruction were it not for the fact that Churchill uses them to such extraordinary emotional effect. The more "blue" and "kettle" crowd speeches the more we are pulled into seeing the depth of the character's feelings and the links between them and Churchill's governing themes.

Anna Wing is almost unbearably moving as the fiercely pragmatic 80-year-old blue stocking who remains unable to express

emotion when meeting the man she believes to be her long lost child. Her performance is symptomatic of Max Stafford-Clark's scrupulous direction, which rivets every small moment to its emotional truth. His splendidly meticulous production is the perfect foil to the formal experimentation. Whether you're laughing at the sheer unabashed imagination of Churchill's visio or being caught short by its powerful emotional undertone, you realise that she has pulled off an exceedingly rare coup: she forces you to see that form and content are indissoluble. In a climate where most playwrights think that structure and plot are the same thing and that compassion is a dirty word, watching *Blue Heart* is a captivating, heady pleasure.

Blue Heart, the second part of Caryl Churchill's dazzling theatrical double bill *Blue Heart*, must be the first play to use Enid Blyton's *The Faraway Tree* as a reference point. Derek, a 40-year-old man who is courting a series of susceptible women into believing they are his mother, visits his real mother in a geriatric ward. In the middle of this beautifully tender scene, he remembers his favourite childhood book, in which every time some children climbed a magic tree they visited a different land. It was a world bursting with delights and surprises, doubts and terrors, hopes and dreams.

Churchill's dramatic world is similarly full of possibilities. Unlike Blyton, however, her bold range is created via a supremely confident use of language and a pungent theatrical vocabulary. The form of the two interlocked plays is startlingly sophisticated yet leaves you wondering why no one has tried something so simple before. In *Hearts' Desire*, a father, mother and aunt are waiting for a daughter to arrive home after years in Australia. It's like a



San Francisco Ballet: first British appearance for 16 years

Theatre

Blue Heart

Blue Heart, the second part of Caryl Churchill's dazzling theatrical double bill *Blue Heart*, must be the first play to use Enid Blyton's *The Faraway Tree* as a reference point. Derek, a 40-year-old man who is courting a series of susceptible women into believing they are his mother, visits his real mother in a geriatric ward. In the middle of this beautifully tender scene, he remembers his favourite childhood book, in which every time some children climbed a magic tree they visited a different land. It was a world bursting with delights and surprises, doubts and terrors, hopes and dreams.

The second programme also featured David Bintley's *The Dance House*, a hideously dressed work about death in general and AIDS in particular, danced to Shostakovich's *Con-*

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Basil Rathbone (Sherlock Holmes) and Nigel Bruce (Dr Watson) in MGM's 1939 'Hound of the Baskervilles'

RONALD GRANT ARCHIVE

Eminent Victorian

Gabriel Josipovici locates a sage in his time

Errata: an examined life by George Steiner, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £11.99

George Steiner's criticism has always striven for grand impersonality, but what has made it interesting has been precisely the flavour it conveys of barely concealed personality. At the end of an essay by Steiner, one's tendency is not to say how true! but how does he manage to know so much, to write with such panache? Now, at last, he has produced a book in which he promises to speak of those things that have made him who and what he is.

The first chapters do not disappoint. They take one from his early childhood in Austria to his brief sojourn in France and on to the French Lycée in Manhattan and the University of Chicago. In a marvellous section he describes how his father coaxed him into reading Homer in Greek and left him with an abiding passion for the classics of Western civilisation. A banker by necessity, he was, according to his son, the epitome of the cultured Viennese Jew: "His learning was extensive and exact ... Investment banking occupied most of his outward existence. At the core, it left him almost indifferent. From this tension came his uncompromising resolve that his son should know next to nothing of his father's profession ... I was to be a teacher and a thorough scholar."

Yet Steiner is half aware that this has been, for him, a mixed blessing. "The cost of this early incision of the classical into my existence has been considerable," he says, and comes back to it at the close, when meditating on the state of our culture at the end of the millennium. I am not sure, though, if he quite realises the degree to which the early influence of his remarkable father has made him what he is, and how even his unease with his inheritance is itself so clearly the mark of one imbued with the culture of 19th-century Germany and Austria.

There is, first of all, the need to inform and persuade, the passion of the teacher, which has always been an integral part of Steiner's writing. I could have done with less of it here, since after the fascinating chapters on his youth and education which I have called 'the epilogue' but which ceases to talk about his own life and



Viennese world: George Steiner, champion of the classics and The Classic, in full flight. PHOTOGRAPH: TOM PILSTON

his rootlessness, in his trilingualism and his sense of being between at least three cultures. But his sense of musical history, too, is culturally specific. It would have been shared by Schoenberg and Wittenstein and Adorno, but not, say, by Stravinsky or Berio or Birtwistle. This history has its apex in Beethoven and Brahms, not in Ockeghem or African drumming.

Steiner blames his education, with its stress on the worship of the classics and The Classic, for not having allowed him to grasp fully what has been happening in our time. "It is the ebbing of ideals and performative hierarchies instrumental since the pre-Socratics, which define what I have called 'the epilogue' but which

instead gives us what are in effect summaries of his long-held views: on Jewishness and the state of Israel; on music; on language; on the fateful collision of new and old in late-20th-century culture.

These are of course central issues, to put it mildly, but I would have preferred him to proceed in the personal vein of the opening chapters. Nevertheless, they all help one to see how large an extent Steiner's view of things is conditioned by his upbringing.

His concern with both language and music has, as he recognises, its roots in

others acclaim as 'the new age'. There is too much I have grasped too late in the day. Too often my activity as a writer and teacher, as a critic and scholar, has been, consciously or not, in an memoir, a curatorship of remembrance."

What Steiner does not seem to see is that this very plausibility, this apocalyptic note, is itself typical of German culture of the late bourgeois period. He could have been quoting from Wittgenstein's *Culture and Value* or Thomas Mann's *Dr Faustus*.

But does the contrast have to be between Brahms and rock, between a profound love of the 19th century and an irresponsible embracing of 'chaos'? Much of the finest art of our century has in fact simply sidestepped the terms in which such a debate has been conducted among those steeped in Germanic culture. There is a combination of lightness and depth in Stravinsky, an elemental quality about Birtwistle or Henry Moore, which owes little to the 19th century and yet is far from the crudities of pop culture or the cynical know-how of post-modernism. Steiner ignores this and goes on asking his large and serious, his very Germanic questions: How can culture and barbarism coexist? Where are we going? And so on.

Towards the end a strange tone surfaces, as Steiner returns again and again to the assertion that he has not achieved the recognition he deserves and that his work has been consistently plagiarised. At the same time, sometimes in the same sentence, he manages to hint at how immensely successful he has been. How can he doubt that the latter is the truth?

He is widely regarded as the foremost cultural critic of his day. And yet his sense of having been betrayed – by his country and city of adoption, by his former pupils – is also very Viennese-Jewish: it is to be found on almost every page of Schoenberg's letters.

But then so is the generosity of spirit which shines through much of this book – the simple enthusiasm for great achievements in whatever field, the warmth of his homage to those who made him what he is. And that is the true George Steiner, though I suppose it is in the nature of things that he should not always be aware of this as his readers.

From diagnosis to deduction

How did a stolid medic invent modern crime fiction? P D James looks for clues

The Doctor, the Detective and Arthur Conan Doyle by Martin Booth, Hodder & Stoughton, £20

A casual glance at the main events of the life of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle can leave the Enquirer with the stereotype of a Victorian gentleman adventurer, either in fact or fiction: patriotic, egregiously brave, given to war-like valour and foreign adventures; a notable sportsman, self-opinionated, obstinate, occasionally pompous, chivalrous and faithful in love, honourable and loyal. Even his early life conforms to the tradition of the self-made man struggling through early deprivation to honour and success. His father was an irresponsible drunkard and it was his mother, Mary Doyle, who was the most important single influence in her son's early life. She gave him her own love of history and literature, her instinct for story-telling and her insistence on honour and fair play. He struggled through five years of medical training and then set up in practice before finding his true and, finally, lucrative profession as an author.

But he was a more complex – indeed, enigmatic and in some respects contradictory – character than a recital of his qualities would suggest. Throughout his life he vigorously fought against injustice wherever he saw it, whether overseas in the Belgian Congo, or at home. Although no friend of female suffrage, he advocated reform of the divorce laws which he rightly saw as prejudiced in favour of men, and he campaigned vigorously and successfully on behalf of prisoners whom he considered had been wrongly convicted, notably Oscar Slater in 1912.

But for an educated man, particularly a doctor, he was curiously naive, even gullible. He came to his belief in spiritualism, the passion of his later years, after careful weighing of the evidence, but that did not prevent him

being the victim of charlatans. At the end of his life he forfeited money, goodwill and admiration by his belief in fairies, taken in by a photograph which was little more than a child's hoax.

It was a full and interesting life, well lived, but it is doubtful whether either his virtues or his eccentricities would have justified this or previous biographies were it not for his creation of a single fictional character, Sherlock Holmes. This is not a judgement which would have afforded satisfaction to Conan Doyle. In placing this achievement in relation to the author's life, Martin Booth has had to rely on previously published records and material, since for some decades biographers have been denied access to Conan Doyle's private papers. Given this prohibition it would be unreasonable to expect new insights and fresh discoveries. Booth has written a conscientious and comprehensive account of his subject's life from the material available; if we wish to find our way to the essential man, we need look little further than his work.

Sherlock Holmes could be said to have been born on 8 March 1886 when Conan Doyle began writing a novella. It was first entitled *A Tangled Skein*, later changed to *A Study in Scarlet*: "the scarlet thread of murder running through the colourless skein of life". The novella, initially rejected by a number of publishers, was finally sold outright to Ward Lock for £25. It was an unpropitious appearance of the first major serial character in British fiction, and one who, through his author's astonishing success, was fundamentally to influence the direction of the modern detective story.

Conan Doyle was fortunate both in his timing – there was a burgeoning middle-class reading public avid for exciting fiction – and in his association from 1891 with the newly published *Strand Magazine* with George Newnes as its proprietor. The magazine was

an immediate success, the first issue selling over 300,000 copies. Editorial policy dictated an illustration on every page and the Sherlock Holmes stories were allocated their own artist, Sidney Paget, whose vivid line drawings perfectly complemented the character, and whose illustrations are still the definitive picture of Sherlock Holmes.

The stories were sensational popular. Queues formed at newsstands on publication day, and Sherlock Holmes quickly became what he remains today: a household name.

The success of the Sherlock Holmes stories is not difficult to explain. They were exciting, dramatic and suspenseful. The two main characters, Holmes and Dr Watson, were contrasting individuals with whom the readers could identify. And in Holmes, Conan Doyle had created the archetypal hero who was nevertheless a true original; brilliantly clever, courageous, eccentric, physically compelling, and the possessor "of the most perfect reasoning and observing machine the world has ever seen".

The plots of the Holmes stories are ingenious but hardly credible. And Conan Doyle was careless about details. The dog that didn't bark in the night is mysterious, but less so than Dr Watson's dog, which disappeared completely. Inspector Lestrade changes his appearance dramatically between *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. The chronology is sometimes confused, parts of London are inaccurately described, and the writing is occasionally slapdash.

None of this worried either Conan Doyle or his readers. A modern crime writer could wish that readers today were so accommodating. As the author wrote of the short stories: "Accuracy of detail matters little. I have never striven for it and have made some bad mistakes in consequence. What matters is that I hold my readers." He did hold them, and he does so still.

The one that got away

Dea Birkett goes fishing with an evergreen grande dame

The Nine Lives of Naomi Mitchison by Jenni Calder, Virago, £20

What is it about Naomi Mitchison? There seems so much meat in her chameleonsocialist life for a good, gutsy biography, pointing to her roots in the Fabianism and feminism of the first half of this century. But, like a female Laurens van der Post, Mitchison has attracted unquestioning awe rather than analysis. When she celebrates her 100th birthday in November, she should be thankful that for a century the critical bounds have been kept at bay.

In the first full account of her life, biographer Jill Benton confessed she was a "passionate student" of Naomi's, "bent on honouring the lives of those accomplished women writers short-changed by literary history" – on which list, of course, Mitchison was high. In Jenni Calder, the Scottish matriarch has another biographer who is also neither detective nor detractor but a devoted disciple. From the outset, Calder clearly draws the line between her subject and us ordinary mortals. "For Naomi Mitchison living has meant not existing, enduring, putting up with, compromising". For her, life has been "adventuring, protesting, galvanising others".

Naomi Mitchison's life is a testament to unbounded energy. She has written more than 80 books, as well as plays, poems, and articles. Her first novel, *The Conquered*, was reputedly drafted on a board resting on her son's pram as she pushed him along the Embankment. She had five surviving children by her patient husband, Dick. She collected lovers as other upper-middle-class women collect fine china. She fought for contraception, nuclear disarmament and fishermen's rights.

In her forties, she bought Carradale House on the Mull of Kintyre and became laird of a Scottish village; in her sixties, she became the "mother" of a Botswanan tribe. This far-reaching life begs for a soubriquet: a society hostess and committed socialist, both battling against and benefiting from class privilege. But any hint of such contradictions is glossed over. "Although professing a lack of interest in possessions," Calder writes, and said to share EM



Woman of the century: the uncompromising Naomi Mitchison, pictured at the age of 16 in 1913 (top) and more recently

Forster's belief that ownership was "the wickedest thing in the universe", Naomi went to Sotheby's and Christie's to buy furniture for her new home. On this, Calder offers no comment.

But Calder's biggest blind spot is in refusing to question Mitchison's claim to be embraced by classes and cultures other than her own. At Carradale, according to Calder, the new laird immediately fell in with the local fishermen. Her evidence for this comes from Mitchison's own poetry, but was this truth masked as fiction, or simply wishful thinking?

In the early Eighties, I wrote to the laird of Carradale asking if I might visit. Like Benton and Calder, I wanted to meet a woman I admired. She invited me for the weekend, and I pitched my one-woman tent in her substantial grounds. During my stay, an expedition was organised to go salmon fishing. We were all issued with wellingtons and waterproofs and told to rendezvous at the back door. Naomi Mitchison, several members of her huge family and myself tramped down to the beach. We stood by while three local fishermen went out in their boat, trawled their net, caught a fish, and brought it back to the shore, where they bludgeoned it to death at their laird's feet. We all walked back to the Big House. Not even the tips of my wellingtons were wet. The next evening we ate the salmon at the grand table, congratulating ourselves on our fine catch. In the Eighties, people still dressed for dinner at Carradale. "Did you enjoy salmon fishing?" someone asked. No one seemed to be aware of the irony.

Such details are not dwelt upon by Calder. She outlines Mitchison's unfailingly successful attempts to be part of communities to which she is a natural outsider. This member of the distinguished Haldane family is said to have blended in beautifully with life at a village in Botswana: "She was soon one of them, a Mokgata, and the 'we' of all her writing about her African identity."

Buried in this hagiography, there is a tiny clue to another Naomi Mitchison, in a throwaway remark made by one of her children. She has never known her mother to go for a walk on her own. Above all, it seems, Nanni Mitchison – an irrepressible "I" – has wanted to be part of a "we".

PAPERBACKS



by Christopher Hirst and Emma Hagestadt

Demonic Males by Richard Wrangham and Dale Peterson (Bloomsbury, £17.99) This enthralling investigation into the "vicious, lethal aggression" endemic in human males begins with a devastating comparison of Rwandan genocide with butchery in chimpanzee communities. The parallels are described as "unsettling", particularly in light of the discovery that chimpanzees are more closely related to humans than to gorillas. The authors convincingly argue against determinism but appear optimistic in their insistence that the acquisition of wisdom can "draw us away from the five-million year stain of our ape past".

Inventing the Abbotts by Sue Miller (Indigo, £5.99) Best known for her novel *The Good Mother*, Sue Miller continues to explore the perils of single-motherhood in her short stories – sex with a new partner while the baby snoozes being one of her favoured themes. In one story a 37-year-old mother inadvisably gets out erotic snapshots of her younger, more nubile self to show to a new lover, while in "Expensive Gifts", a woman who begins the night in bed with an unfamiliar man ends it snuggled up to her two-year-old son. In this titillating, readable collection, only the book's title story, about two brothers' obsession with a family of sisters, fails to pack a punch.

Racing Pigs and Giant Marrows by Harry Pearson (Abacus, £5.99) Like the naughty boy in every class, Pearson can't stop cracking jokes. This account of 25 North Country shows, ranging from the Appleby Horse Fair to the Egton Gooseberry Fair, is packed with gags. Fortunately, they're very good ones, such as the way that a crab sandwich, left in Tupperware for an hour, produces "the nauseating stench of a Russian factory ship becalmed in the Indian ocean with a faulty refrigeration system". This book is a joy and a treasure.

In the Garden of Desire by Wendy Maltz and Susie Boss (Bantam, £9.99) In this survey of the sexual fantasies of more than 100 American women, one of the participants remarks: "Fantasies don't fart, suffer exhaustion or leave balled-up socks on the floor." Unlike their male counterparts, female fantasies tend to be complex narratives: "I imagine I'm a meditation student using a secluded ashram in the woods..." Six common fantasy roles include Victim, Dominatrix and Voyeur. As the authors note, "We don't have to like fantasy for it to provide a positive function."

Portofino by Frank Schaeffer (Black Swan, £6.99) Eyes fixed on his three slices of tuna, three slices of salami, four olives and round of mortadella, young Calvin Becker prays that the rest of the *pensione* won't notice his mother saying grace. Just one of the countless embarrassing moments recalled in Schaeffer's semi-autobiographical novel remembering Sixties holidays on the Italian Riviera with his American missionary parents. A novel that glows with sentiment and cheap red wine.

AUDIOBOOKS



I am made uneasy by any form of writing which cannot readily be spoken aloud", says Laurie Lee in "True Adventures of a Boy Reader", the first of the stories that make up *I Can't Stay Home* (Isis, 2hrs 30mins, £3.99). He was, he explains, the inheritor of an oral tradition of language – "a vocabulary small though naturally virile, the words ancient, round and warm to the tongue." How he discovered the "power and glory, persuasive magic and ready gift of hallucination" of books, and moved from Defoe, Bunyan and Swift to the moderns, explains the genesis of his sturdy romantic style. Appropriately, his own voice redoubles its charm.

The litigious altercation of J.R.R. Tolkien's translation of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (HarperCollins, 2hrs 30mins, £8.99) makes no easy task for the reader, but Terry Jones, a medievalist as well as an actor, tackles it gamely.

Christina Hardymont

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A regular guy, lost in love's labyrinth

Penelope Lively follows a gifted yarn-spinner into the masculine maze

Larry's Party by Carol Shields, Fourth Estate, £16.99

Carol Shields has always been a wonderful manipulator of structure in her fiction. She plays around with the conventions of linear narrative and then delivers some arresting brew of her own. *The Stone Diaries* served up a whole range of evidence about the life of its protagonist. *Happenstance* sliced a marriage and gave the wife's point of view, and then the husband's. *Mary Swan* – a particular favourite with me – hid its dead woman poet behind the obsessive manoeuvrings of her admirers, juggled with evidence again and even supplied persuasive poetry somewhere after Emily Dickinson.

Shields also has a corner in esoteric occupations thoroughly researched. By the end of *Happenstance*, you knew a lot of interesting stuff about quilt-making. *The Republic of Love* filled you in on

mermaid mythology. The hero of *Larry's Party*, true to form, is a designer of garden mazes and the story of his life is told in a way that is circular and circumstantial, linear only in the sense that it homes in on him at carefully selected moments.

What all this amounts to is that Carol Shields has thought far more intently than most novelists about this tricky, seminal and often betraying matter of the selection of evidence. Why tell the reader this rather than that? Her fiction is a cunning tapestry of judiciously chosen threads. You won't see the pattern until the very last moment, when you stand back and look.

Larry's Party ends with just that: the party at which the various elements of his life are brought together for a triumphant dénouement. "What's it like being a man these days?" someone asks: a flip, dinner-party remark which then prompts some heartfelt alcoholic comment and also serves as the focus of the entire novel.

This is a book about what it is like to be a man at this point in time – or rather, to be a Canadian floral designer (who thinks that he may be, just probably, a little banal) as interpreted by a shrewd woman novelist.

Larry Weller was not particularly bright at school. His reflections on his own possible banality arise when he first comes across the word, at a time when he is obsessed with the fact that he is semantically deprived – "the empty white echo he sometimes bears can be calmed by words". When he left school, his mother enquired about a course in furnace repair but the local college sent the brochure on floral arts by mistake: a nice conjunction of bappetance and linguistic confusion.

Larry is not banal, in the sense that no one is. He could be seen as ordinary – he has no particular distinction of mind, no great powers of perception – but in the hands of his sympathetic creator he

becomes a kind of archetype. He is decent, striving and perplexed. This perplexity lies at the heart of things and informs his erratic progress through two marriages and a further relationship until the final watershed. He moves from his first love, sprightly Dorrie, to Beth, herself something of an archetype: a self-absorbed Eighties woman writing a doctoral thesis on women saints (a quintessential Shields touch, that), who quotes Donne in bed. Women dominate the book, even if it is a man's story – and very properly so, since the questions of gender and the shifting balance between the sexes are the matters at issue.

There are no easy answers here; this is not prescriptive writing. Larry's story is not offered as some salutary tale of what happened to Western men in the last quarter of the 20th century but rather as a reflection of how one such may have perceived his problems. And a convincing account it is too, quite blowing apart

that rigid notion that women cannot write of men (or vice versa, for that matter). Through Larry's eyes and by way of his experience we sample all the daillness of existence alongside the significant themes in his life: the moment when he walks out on his first marriage, his feelings for his son, his unexpected advance, as a fashionable designer of mazes for wealthy patrons.

The concept of the maze features prominently – both symbolic (perhaps a bit banally so) and practical. Early on Larry goes through some sort of mystical experience in the Hampton Court maze. This came across as somewhat baffling, but I suppose that mystical events are just that. At any rate, the moment disposes him and acts also as a directive. From then on, maze theory will become an obsession, powering the twists and loops of Larry's progress and lending an idiosyncratic spin to this clever and beguiling novel.



Mary Ellen Mark's spine-chilling picture of a snake charmer with his son, outside Delhi (1981), comes from 'India: a Celebration of Independence', edited by Victor Anant (Aperture, £35), a panoramic survey of the nation by great photographers, from Cartier-Bresson to Salgado

The regeneration game

INDEPENDENT CHOICE

Laurence O'Toole scans BritLit for a wicked hit



Pick of the week
Are You Experienced?
by William Sutcliffe

pleasure, or from writing in a style which reflects the experiences of her characters. In recent times, the fusion of new leisure technologies – drugs, dance, music, computers and videogames – has had a considerable influence on the shape of British art, fashion and advertising, as well as on the popular fiction of writers such as Alan Warner, Bridget O'Connor and Stewart Home, with their varied experiments in non-linear narrative forms.

Such disapproval prevents Kays from conveying the thrill or euphoria of

Even the old fashioned, boozy *Camden Girls* makes some stab at expanding the reader's mind, dropping the occasional fragment of stream-of-consciousness into the mix. Going into a rave, Junn abstains from using any punctuation for a while: "Let it go now just feel the music feel the power in all these people we are family." I suppose even William Burroughs had to start somewhere.

These difficult questions of style don't really come up with *Are You Experienced?* (Hamish Hamilton, £9.99), the third and the best of these novels. Where *Wasted* ends with Saul leaving for India, William Sutcliffe's second novel opens with Dave and Liz already on the plane, bound for New Delhi.

During her year off before starting college, Liz is hoping to find spiritual meaning in the subcontinent, whilst Dave, being of a more materialist persuasion, is hoping finally to get Liz to have sex with him.

What he in fact gets is all the high-grade dope he can handle, and vicious diarrhoea. In turn, Liz comes to realise that she can't stand Dave, dumping him for a charlatan hony and tantric sex. She also takes to wearing saris and hugging street beggars.

Are You Experienced? is a comic novel of oneupmanship and bickering between young people desperate to be liked by each other. It is therefore both very modern and timeless.

Wisely, Sutcliffe doesn't try to be so trendy, or to catch the mood of a generation. Instead, he deploys a fine talent for social satire, brilliantly, if bizarrely, relocating the screwball comedies of Thirties Hollywood to the hippy trail of the Nineties, where young backpackers trek through "Indiabah" mainly as a character-building experience to put on their CVs, and the truly sacred text is not *The Bhagavad Gita* but *The Lonely Planet Guide*. Here, beneath the hype of a publisher's till for fashionability, lies a wonderfully acute, heartfelt – even "wicked" – piece of new fiction.

Cargo of despair

Fraser Harrison takes the Middle Passage and laments man's inhumanity to man

Feeding the Ghosts by Fred D'Aguilar, Chatto & Windus, £14.99

Disrael is running riot on the slave ship *Zong* as it plies the middle passage between West Africa and Jamaica. The captain decides to protect his healthy cargo by slinging overboard the infected "pieces". In this way he plans to halt the disease, save rations and preserve a profitable ratio of the ship's "holdings".

He is confident he will recover the value of his losses from the insurers back in London. He orders his crew to throw overboard 132 pieces of "stock" – men, women and children plucked out of the hold and marked as strokes in his meticulous register before being namelessly dropped into the sea and the void of history.

One of the slaves, Mintah – condemned to death for insolence rather than infirmity – manages to climb back on board. With the help of the cook's assistant she not only stays alive to lead an abortive rebellion, but finds pen and paper and writes a journal of these dreadful events.

This document is produced in court when the suit for compensation is heard. Among other things, it reveals that one of the allegedly sick children had to be chased round the deck before she was caught and dumped in the waves. "Where is the necessity in the decision to dispose of her?" asks the lawyer for the insurers.

Fred D'Aguilar's third novel is derived from a true case, given much uncomfortable publicity by Granville Sharp, first chairman of the Quaker Society for the abolition of slavery. D'Aguilar convincingly conjures up the appalling conditions in which newly captured slaves were imprisoned during their voyage to the West Indies. None of the white characters uses the word "slaves"; they are invariably referred to as "stock". D'Aguilar further reinforces their loss of individuality by differentiating only Mintah.

The others are never more than anonymous pairs of eyes staring out of the fetid darkness in the hold. Their atrocious situa-

tion is mostly suggested by means of the crewmen's disgust at having to go below. There is a telling moment, as forceful as any account of rape or beating, when the first mate's lamp is nearly extinguished by lack of oxygen in the women's section. This is truly imaginative historical fiction.

The first part of the novel is more concerned with the slaves than with the slaves. It seems to be asking the age-old question: how can humans do this to each other? The white men are individualised, but only in so far as they vary in their reactions to the captain's orders. Some grumble a little, but all obey in the end.

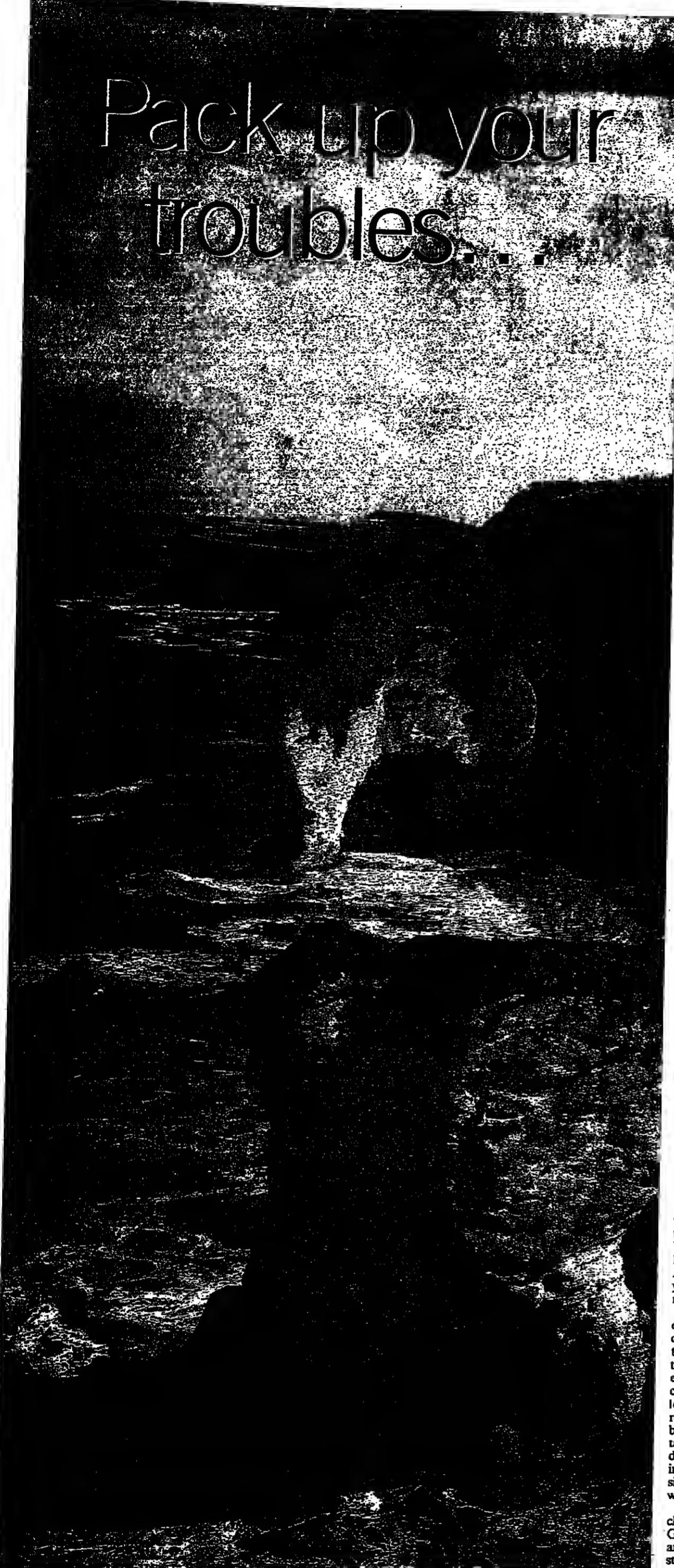
The only man who shows compassion is the assistant cook, and he is a simpleton. The very fact that the slave trade flourished for so many years proves that our 18th-century ancestors, like those responsible for the Holocaust, behaved as D'Aguilar suggests: with unconcerned cruelty. Perhaps such people do not deserve deeper inspection. On the other hand, to dismiss them as sadists and buffoons is surely a mistake.

D'Aguilar depicts the judge in the insurance case, Lord Mansfield, as a man fonder of lunch than of justice who never recognises the barbarity of the case. The fact that this cartoon is unrepresentative of the historical Lord Mansfield does not matter, but what makes slavery and other atrocities the harder to understand is that they are not committed only by brutes, but by intelligent and cultivated people as well. Their mentality does therefore need to be explained.

The humanity of Mintah is set against the men's callousness, and if she occasionally seems too heroic and literary to be entirely credible, she is nonetheless a moving creation. D'Aguilar invests her with a poetic grain that will grow round the terrible knot of the voyage, allowing her to survive, her soul intact. The wood of her being is contrasted with the rapacity and indifference of the sea. And, his eloquence in full flight, D'Aguilar implies that there is always a *Zong* at sea somewhere.

travel & outdoors

Pack up your
troubles.



Anatomy of Antrim: on a scale for scenery, this shoreline would score higher than anywhere else in the UK

President Clinton doesn't want you to go on holiday. OK: that's an exaggeration. What the world's most powerful man wants to stop you doing is going on holiday to Cuba.

There are two main reasons why you might decide to book a trip to Cuba. The first is the opportunity to visit the last sensible bastion of socialism, a nation that has survived for nearly 40 years under the guidance (or should that be "thumb"?) of Fidel Castro, the world's longest-serving political leader. The second is that the Caribbean's largest island has some splendid beaches and decent rum, and happens to be stupidly cheap at the moment. But whichever reason applies, Mr Clinton has placed all sorts of obstacles between you and Havana.

Britain's travellers are caught up in the economic war being waged by the United States against what it says is an oppressive and undemocratic regime. There are, of course, many oppressive and undemocratic regimes in the world, but the only one that Washington makes a fuss about us visiting is Cuba.

You might imagine that the British should be able to travel without outside interference. But the tentacles of Mr Clinton's economic embargo extend so deep that Britain's biggest tour operator, Thomson, has withdrawn its holidays in Cuba for fear that its directors would be denied permission to travel to the US (one of the consequences of "trading with the enemy"). Plenty of other tour operators continue to offer holidays in

Cuba, but a leading chain of British travel agencies is set to stop selling them.

The imminent takeover by the US company Carlson of the tour operator Inspirations will mean that all branches of the travel agent AT Mays become American-owned. As soon as the deal goes through, AT Mays will stop selling Cuba.

Independent agents and operators will continue to risk the wrath of the White House by selling holidays in Cuba, and independent-minded travellers will continue to buy them. Should you book a seat from Gatwick to Havana on the Cuban national airline, you will find the aircraft used will be a DC-10 - manufactured in Long Beach, California. Mr Clinton's embargo must be alarmingly leaky if it allows a plane that size through the net.



"Discussing the black market with clients was a no-win situation, rather like discussing sex with teenagers"



Tessellation row: the Giant's Causeway is Antrim's biggest drawcard

PHOTOGRAPHS: CHRISTOPHER HILL

Far beyond Belfast's tensions lies one of the world's most spectacular coastlines - as Simon Calder discovers on a trip along the edge of Antrim

OE hundred degrees? The thermometer may have climbed that high where you were this week, but on the coast of County Antrim the temperature stayed well within two Fahrenheit figures. Were there a scale for scenery, though, this shoreline would surely score higher than anywhere else in the kingdom. Two of the UK's most stunning pieces of coastal scenery are separated by seven miles. And between them lies an absurdly beautiful beach.

Yet this tableau is but the denouement of a story which begins much further south and west along the shore.

World travellers think they can list great coastal drives at the drop of a place name: Highway One in California, the Great Ocean Road in the Australian state of Victoria ... They should add the A2 from Larne to Cushendall. For 25 miles, the road crouches between the land and the shore, leading you past a succession of scenes. First, unglamorous suburbia; next, standard-issue, ultra-green Irish farmland; then, high-cliffed, through which the road occasionally drills. (Punctuating this tale of majesty, though, is a series of ragged urban settlements for which the clichés "quaint" and "charming" can remain safely stowed in the thesaurus.)

Not that the residents aren't friendly, mind. You know the sorts of organisations where a house rule insists that the phone is answered within four rings? The Northern Ireland Tourist Board appears to have a similar policy to help tourists. If any visitor enters a pub alone, one of the locals is obliged strike up a conversation within 10 seconds. I tested this on three occasions this week, and it worked every time.

Soak up the stout with a helping of dulse - dried, salted seaweed which some locals believe deserves to be as ubiquitous as potato crisps. When you track some down by following one of the signs beside the A2 advertising "Dulse, 100 yards", you find out why it isn't: the taste resembles spinach-flavoured Seltzopf.

Cushendall represents the best base for exploring the Nine Glens of Antrim that carve up the nearby countryside. Each valley has been chiselled out of the ancient rock by a river; some are fearsomely steep, but the A2 follows the path of least resistance along broad Glencore. At Cushendun, you could continue gently along the inland route. Be tempted, though, by the signposted "Scenic route via Carrick-a-Rede", which lives up to its promise.

In a series of switchbacks, the road claws along the coast, reaching 650ft at Green Hill (a fellow cyclist I met had amended his map to replace the under-stated word "hill" with something much more graphic). Apart from the odd wheezing cyclist, you feel quite cut off from the

rest of the world. The only visible company is the dark, brooding shape of the Mull of Kintyre, 13 miles away across the North Channel. You start humming the tune, and by the following day are still doing so (and cursing Sir Paul McCartney for his anthem to the Scottish peninsula).

Ballycastle, where normal life resumes, is a bit of a boom town this summer. The old ferry link to Campbeltown, abandoned around the time Paul McCartney had a Christmas No 1 with his dirge, has been reinstated. Never mind that the vessel that the Argyll & Antrim Steam Packet Co is using, *MV Claymore*, has enjoyed many better days: the route opens up all sorts of possibilities for travellers wanting to make a circuit of Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The town remains endearingly unaffected by the attention: the garden of the house three doors along from my hostel featured an old bidet in place of a plant pot.

Most of the new arrivals turn right out of the harbour, and start climbing the cliffs to the west. Five miles out, at the apex of a hairpin bend, a sign points towards Carrick-a-Rede, which translates from the Gaelic as

The island degenerates into the sea after a couple of hundred yards along the footpath, but from it you can survey its stout sibling, Sheep Island, and gape at the scale of the shoreline (or is that inrepidation at the prospect of the return journey?).

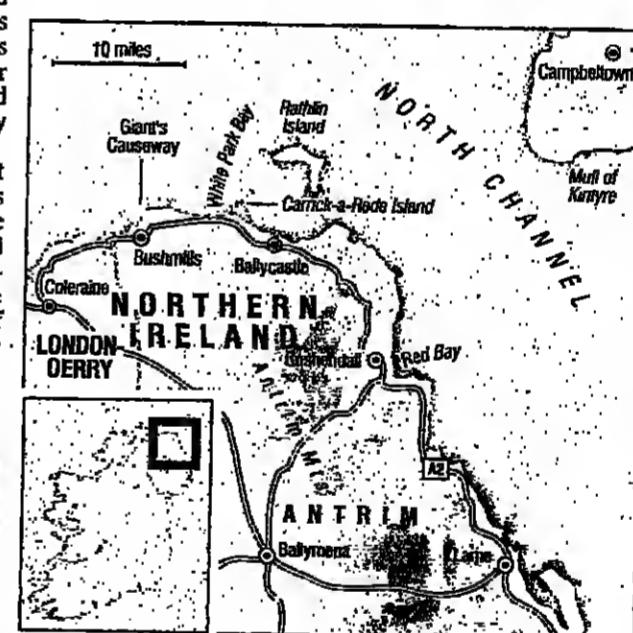
Assuming you make it, continue along to another National Trust treasure: White Park Bay. Were you to design the perfect beach from scratch, it would look a lot like this: a mile-long arc of blanched sand, sheltering between two mighty headlands. What makes White Park Bay special is what's absent: no buildings beyond a couple of handsome houses, and no people - presumably because this is Antrim, not Antigua.

No other island can boast Antrim's final phenomenon: the Giant's Causeway. As bees will testify, nature adores a hexagon. For geological and geometric proof, take the trail down from the coast road to a sight for which, like all real wonders, no photograph can prepare you. An ancient volcanic eruption somehow crystallised into a chorus of hexagonal columns, each a subtly different height. They tessellate together to form a broad promenade into the sea. You find yourself drawn to the cedar-shiny with spray, and turn to face the exquisite detail of the causeway against a magnificently barren backdrop. At dusk, you find yourself alone, yet again.

To go from this to surveying number plates might sound eccentric. But I wanted to find out whence the few visitors that there were had come. So for the hour's cycle ride home, I counted. German tourists were tops, followed by French and Dutch. Not one vehicle, though, from England, Wales or Scotland.

One reason for three-quarters of the United Kingdom perversely avoiding a spectacular coast was summed up on the road sign announcing truthfully: "Antrim's Coast - An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty". Someone had spray-painted the initials of the Ulster Volunteer Force over the sign, and an accomplice had plastered "Victory at Drumcree" in large blue caps across the width of the road. But not once this week did the coastline feel like a front line.

Simon Calder paid £27 to sail from Larne to Larne aboard P&O's *Jetliner* (01224 572615). He returned from Ballycastle to Campbeltown on the Argyll & Antrim Steam Packet, the *Claymore*, fare £23 (0345 523523). He stayed at Kathleen Quinn's bed and breakfast at Stranore in Cushendall (012667 71610) for £15 a night, and paid £6 a night for a bed at the Castle Hostel by the harbour in Ballycastle (012657 62337). More information: Northern Ireland Tourist Board, 11 Anne's Court, 59 North Street, Belfast BT1, N.I. (01232 231221). No map is necessary for the stretch between Larne and Cushendall (just stick to the A2), but beyond that, sheet five of the Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland 1:50,000 series is recommended.



"road in the rock". Follow the signs to see why: the rock juts out into the sea like a bulky semi-colon, separated from the shore by a narrow channel (the "road") hewn through sheer cliffs.

The average visitor comes here for a cheap thrill. The channel is crossed by a terrifying rope walkway, agitated by even a benevolent breeze. Two at a time, tourists teeter across the 20 yard divide. Those with unkind travelling companions are instructed to pause halfway across to pose for the camera. Dogs, a sign helpfully warns, are banned - any hound would certainly tumble through the worryingly open spaces between the ropes and the plank, along which a petrified Japanese girl is stumbling. Seabirds circle and heckle, while waves emphasise the rocks 200 feet below by repeatedly smashing against them.

The great thing about Carrick-a-Rede is that you are drawn here for the crack, but stumble across a splendid vista of seascapes.

"I read the story over a beer and sandwich in Prenzlauerberg, a Bohemian quarter in former East Berlin - where, in the mid-Eighties, black-market books and tapes were just as important as Western currency. I can't say I miss the black market, now that prices in Berlin have fallen, and good exchange rates are equally available from cashpoints.

exchange bureaux and banks. And, of course, Sterling is strong all over the former communist world."

Given American sensitivities, I shall not name the individual who suggested that the best black-market anywhere involves smuggling Havana cigars into the US, where aficionados will pay a fortune for the real thing.

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Safari in the land of sand

Namibia is exotic but accessible, as Scarlett McCwire discovered

Oh, this is better than *Wildlife on One*," enthused seven-year-old Mishka, as she spotted an elephant. We had been in Namibia's celebrated Etosha Park a mere 15 minutes and already zebra had casually crossed the road in front of us and we'd seen giraffes munching the tops of roadside bushes. Herds of springbok nibbled at the grass, friskily nervous. The five of us sat in the car, staring at real, wild African animals for the first time in our lives.

We had organised the trip on our own from London - saving ourselves money and allowing for much wider choice than is offered by a package - and we had been surprised at how easy it had been. The efficient Namibia Tourist Information had sent us an envelope containing a list of registered accommodation (government and private), brochures, a map, and details of car hire companies. With the aid of a guidebook, we had decided where we wanted to go, and bookings had been made by phone or fax. Every reservation was kept.

The car hire company advised us against a four-wheel drive for our itinerary, as the roads were so good. So we saved ourselves £20 a day, but our rented car still cost nearly £50 a day. They also gave us valuable advice on how not to flip a car, a tourist speciality: drive on dust roads at 80kph with two hands always on the wheel. In Namibia, which is five times the size of Britain and has only 1.6 million people, meeting one car every 10km is par for the course.

After arranging the flight, my first call was to book a "luxury" bungalow at Okakuejo camp in Etosha near the waterhole. (The adjective reflects neither the standard nor the price.) These need to be reserved some months in advance; the alternative is a more expensive hotel outside the park. Etosha is open only from sunrise to sunset, so those staying outside cannot enjoy an evening at the waterhole

watching the animals leisurely come and go. It is the surest chance of seeing the rare black rhino; a pair came down both nights that we were there.

We stayed two nights at Okakuejo, and two at the eastern camp, Namutoni. During the day we went on DIY game drives. We bought a map of Etosha which had seven pages of pictures of birds and animals, and we drove around, able to identify what we saw: such as kudu antelope, and warthog families, which run around in the long grass with their tails up like flags so that they can see each other.

Our summer is their winter and dry season, so the animals were easy to see as they congregated around or journeyed to the waterholes, all of which were marked on the map. The days were T-shirt and shorts weather, but the nights and early mornings were cold.

After Etosha we had booked two guest lodges: the tiny, remote Kaross Lodge, where Tammy and Uwe Hoth were happy to answer all our questions - from race and politics, to the habits and habitats of the animals - and Mount Ego, more the size of an English country hotel, which had brought animals such as elephants and rhinos on to the farm for the tourists and, rather more dubiously, a large pen of lions, which were fed every night.

We had decided to stay three nights in each place, so the children would not find the driving too gruelling, particularly as every guest lodge has its own daily activities. At Mount Ego the extra day meant we were able to arrange horse-riding. While at Kaross, which is at the western end of Etosha, we went into the closed part of the park with Uwe as a guide and learnt far more about the animals we saw than we could have done from any book.

The food was astonishing in both quality and quantity, at both places. Twelve-year-old Pascoe and his father liked to admire the impala and oryx during the day and savour them in the evening, to Mishka's horror. 17-year-old Molly and I found the selection of vegetable dishes quite wide enough to fill us up. A fresh

home-baked cake every afternoon made us feel completely spoilt.

Staying at Kaross, visitors are made to feel like guests, and all meals are taken together. The Hoths have started a foundation, Afri-leo, to save lions, which often escape from Etosha and are shot by farmers. Their first rescue was to buy five of the animals, including three cubs, which had been kept in dreadful conditions in a zoo, and at least give them some space; they can never be reintroduced to the wild. Meeting and learning about the lions was part of our stay.

We then made for the coast, taking in the colony of 80,000 seals on our way to the cold, clammy seaside resort of Swakopmund. You can choose from camel riding in the desert, viewing the flamingo colony in nearby Walvis Bay, or dune buggy riding.

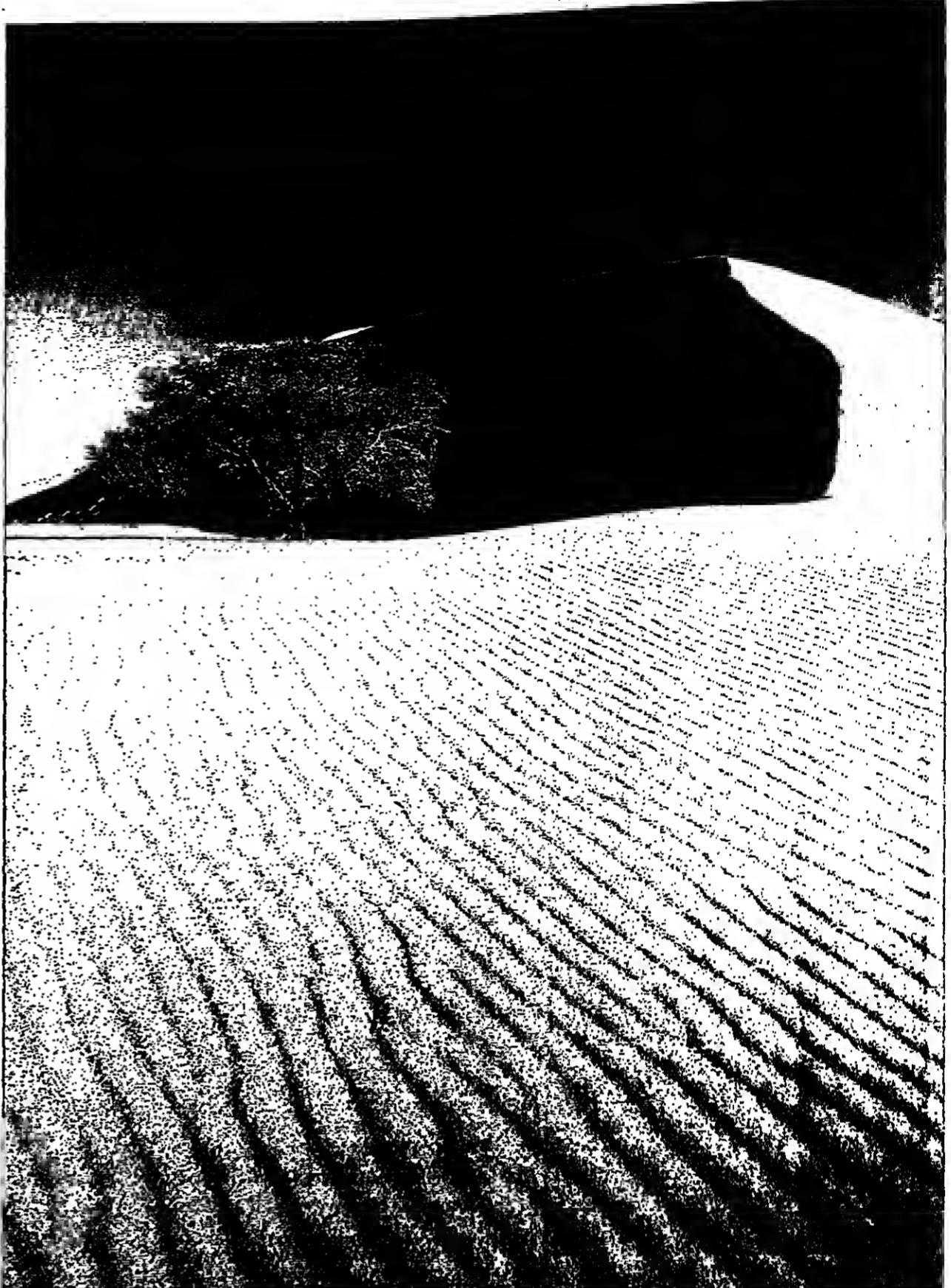
Our last stop was Namibia's most famous landmark, the pink Sossusvlei dunes, at 300 metres reputed to be the highest in the world. It took a pre-dawn start to be at the park gates at sunrise, then a 65-km drive, followed by a 5-km walk for those without four-wheel drive.

Finally we stood on the crest of Sossusvlei, looking at the parabolae made by the surrounding dunes merging in red, pink and orange, and then we launched ourselves off to race down the side. It was one of those rare moments of total exhilaration for us all.

The only airline with direct flights from the UK to Namibia is Air Namibia (0181-944 6181). Until the end of October, the airline is charging £445 return (including tax) from Heathrow to the capital, Windhoek, but after that the fare increases to £693.

Lower fares may be available from discount agents on airlines such as Lufthansa and South African Airways, via Frankfurt and Johannesburg respectively.

Namibia Tourist Information: 5 Chandos Street, London W1 (0171-636 2924). Daunt Books for Travellers (0171-224 2295) recommends the 'Namibia Handbook' (Footprint, £9.99).



Just deserts: Namibia's sand dunes dwarf even those of the mighty Sahara

PHOTOGRAPH: PAULS

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Blenheim Palace – a fantastic display of 18th-century intellect, wit and pleasure
PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN LAWRENCE



DAYS OUT

Monumental, it may be, but Blenheim Palace is a paradise for children too, writes Catherine Stebbings

Blenheim Palace, the seat of the Duke of Marlborough, is one of England's most imposing stately homes. The massive house was built by a grateful nation for John Churchill, who became a national hero and the 1st Duke after his defeat of the French at Blenheim, in Bavaria, in 1704.

It was also the birthplace of Winston Churchill – and although he never lived here he is buried in Bladon, on the edge of the estate.

The vast classical palace, with its sprawling symmetry, majestic colonnades and imposing Corinthian portico, is typical of the work of the architect and playwright, Sir John Vanbrugh. Blenheim is a fantastic display of 18th-century intellect, wit and pleasure.

The monumental mansion exudes grandeur, opulence and power, but its size makes it uninhabitable.

Inside, Blenheim has it all: architectural details include work by Hawksmoor and Grinling Gibbons, murals and ceilings painted by Laguerre. Paintings include works by Rubens, Van Dyck and Sir Joshua Reynolds, and there are vast cabinets of Meissen and Sèvres, and sculptures by Ryshack, Epstein and Coyskov.

Outside, a number of formal gardens with fountains, ponds and neatly clipped hedges elegantly separate the house from "Capability" Brown's landscaped park.

An arboretum, including a rose garden, hides many rare and interesting species.

The former kitchen garden, now known as the Pleasure

Gardens, offers many activities, particularly for younger visitors, including a butterfly house. The main attraction of this part of the palace complex, however, is the world's largest hedge maze, representing the history of the palace, known as the Marlborough Maze. Opened in 1991, it is now mature enough to puzzle even the most wily of visitors.

In the same area is a model of a local street, as well as putting greens, giant chess and draughts, and lots more for children wanting to let off steam.

The visitors
Keith Jenkins, social work team manager, and his wife Sara, teacher, took their daughter Hannah and her friend Imogen, both seven years old.

Sara The house has an idyllic setting, with its immense park and large lake, and smaller formal gardens around the house. Although we shared the day with thousands of others it was not claustrophobic; there was just a wonderful feeling of space. Everything is beautifully kept and well organised. No litter, no mess, no

queues and plenty of refreshment stops. The children couldn't follow the guided tour in the house, partly because they were swamped by a large group of adults so they were unable to see or hear. So I took them off and we made our own way, dodging between groups, and the children enjoyed looking at the tapestries, furniture and paintings at their own pace. We must have been inside for at least an hour.

Keith: The tours around the palace were well organised and kept moving despite the large number of people. I enjoyed the tour very much; it was both entertaining and historically interesting. The guides took us from one room to the next giving a brief story of the palace, the Churchills and the family, looking at a few objects along the way. It was fascinating. I thought the library was particularly impressive.

Essentially you come here to see the palace, but there is lots more, which makes it a good family day. It didn't feel over-hyped like stately homes which are dependent on theme parks. Blenheim had a pleasant, unsophisticated, old-

fashioned touch to it. It was a great way to combine education with a little bit of leisure.

Hannah: I really enjoyed the pleasure gardens where there was lots to do and see. I loved the maze, which was quite big and very difficult. I got lost a lot even though the hedges aren't that high. We also saw lots of pretty butterflies and plants in the butterfly house, and then we took the mini-train back to the house.

I loved going around the lake in the little boat. We saw masses of swans, a heron and a little geese. It was really a good day to see the park, but we didn't go under the big bridge.

The house was interesting, too. In the room where Winston Churchill was born I saw a frame with his curl in it.

I liked the blue-and-white china and the huge tapestries on the wall – they were as big as a carpet and had really tiny stitches. We saw lots of clocks, furniture and statues – loads of things like that.

Imogen: I really enjoyed the park and the gardens – even though we were attacked

by wasps on our picnic. The maze was great and they had lots to play on, like monkey bars, putting and giant chess.

But the adventure playground wasn't so good, because it was stuck behind a high wall.

I thought the house was quite interesting but there was so much gold everywhere that it was completely over the top.

In the library there was a statue of Queen Anne made of marble, but it had so much carving on it that it looked like marzipan.

The deal
Blenheim Palace (01993 811091), Woodstock, Oxfordshire, is 10 miles north of Oxford on the A44 and is well signposted. Parking is free in the park close to the palace entrance.

Opening hours: Blenheim Palace is open daily, 10.30am-5.30pm, last admission 4.45pm, from mid-March to the end of October. The park is open daily, 9am-5pm. Dogs are not allowed into the palace or the palace gardens, but may go on a lead in the park.

Admission: palace and park: adults £7.80, OAPs £5.80, children aged 5-15 £3.80. Family ticket (two adults, two children) £20. This includes the tour around the

house, the Churchill exhibition, boat ride, train rides and entrance to the herb garden, butterfly house as well as an adventure play-ground. Park only: adults £3, children aged five to 15, £1.50. Extras: Guided tours around private apartments from noon until 4pm: adults £3.40, children £1.70. Walled garden, which includes maze and children's games, £1. Bouncy castle, 50p. Brochure, £3.50.

Access: on foot or level ground, with lots of ramps for buggies and wheelchairs and a small train to take visitors from the bouse to the pleasure gardens.

Food: plenty of refreshment stops for drinks and ice-cream. Interesting lunches are served in the elegant Indian Room restaurant overlooking the water terraces: three courses £14.50, two courses £12.95. Lighter meals are offered at the adjoining cafeteria: baguettes £2.80, veggie special £2.90. There is also a cafe in the pleasure gardens for light meals and snacks. Picnicking is popular and there is plenty of space.

Shops: there are a good number of shops selling books, gifts and sweets. Souvenirs range from Blenheim fudge to golf balls carrying the Blenheim logo.

Toilets: clean, efficient and numerous.

Are we nearly there Bank holiday days out

Saturday though Monday, Thomas and Percy will be there and the last train leaves at 4pm. Admission is £3.50 per person and children get a present from the Fat Controller as a memento of the day.

Farewell Hungerford Castle, Wales (01225 754026) follows the medieval theme with juggling, jesters and jousting games, specifically designed to be safe for

children. At £2.50 for adults and £1.25 for children, this is well worth a look on Sunday and Monday (10am-6pm).

ALL DRESSED UP Warwick Castle, Warwick (01926 406600). This weekend the castle entertains the "Knights Errant". A medieval tale is told throughout the castle over the holiday period. At 1pm and 3.45pm the Magic

Concessions £4.50 and children (under 16) £2.

The North of England Balloon Show, Ripley Castle, North Yorkshire (01423 770152) takes place on Sunday and Monday there will be a re-enactment of the siege of the castle followed at 6pm by the balloon ascent. Every night there will be a laser

and light show over the lake with glowing tethered balloons and fireworks to finish. Adults £6, children £4 for one evening performance and one day time entry.

FOR A PIECE OF THE ACTION

Ultimate Fast Car '97, Santa Pod Raceway, Bedfordshire (01483 418798).

This will appeal to the older more frenetic child. Run in conjunction with *Fast Car Magazine*, car drivers battle

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with your in-car stereo.

(And if your children aren't deafened by this, you may at least hope that they will never wish to jack up the volume again.) Adults £15 for the three day weekend, children £8.

Cadwell Park Circuit, Lincolnshire (01507 342484) hosts MCN British Super Bike Championships.

Practice and qualifiers are

over the weekend (free

entry for children) and the

races are on Monday. The

Ulster Grand Prix (01846

643460) on Saturday is the

place to see international

motorcyclists. Entry to the

circuit is £7 for adults, but is

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Wind resistant: the garden at Dunbeath Castle is a haven carved out of a hostile world
PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN PAUL PHOTOGRAPHY

Enlosure was the defining feature of the first gardens. It provided safety from wild beasts, marauding neighbours and encroaching wilderness, and protection from the elements. The garden was a small piece of paradise carved out of a hostile world. For a 20th-century take on that medieval battle between order and chaos, go to Dunbeath on the east coast of Scotland, beyond Inverness.

Dunbeath Castle is built on a steep, narrow promontory of rock, surrounded on three sides by the sea. In terms of military defence, the situation is ideal, but by any other measure this is an inhospitable place as Wales on Sunday. So the visual shock when you open the door into Dunbeath's secret-walled garden is all the greater: roses, delphiniums, snapdragons, honeysuckle, brilliant annuals, fuchsias and agapanthus packpell-mell into the short growing season which is all the time the terrain allows.

Dunbeath's gardener, James Campbell, has worked here for 20 years. Didn't he ever get frustrated by frosts in late May and early September, sea fogs, gales from the north-east and from the south-west, all of which are standard fare at Dunbeath? "I was born here," he said, simply. He has never known any other way of gardening. "I like the atmosphere of the place. I'm not a hustler and bustle person."

The weather, he concedes, can be "very brutal" and this year has not been an easy one. There has been very little sun and the annuals he set out have been sulking because of it. His Livingstone daisies gave up the ghost altogether. However, the double herbaceous borders that run down the centre of the garden are flourishing with wonderful swathes of agapanthus edging the central round.

The garden is divided into eight plots, four either side of the great double borders. It's still a productive garden, as it was meant to be when the walls were first thrown up some time around 1800. There are cabbages, peas, onions, potatoes, masses of soft fruit, all edged with annuals. Globe artichokes thrive, which is surprising. So does the Moroccan broom, *Cytisus battandieri*, which is carefully tied in against the wall. Like the one-time soldiers on the ramparts of the castle nearby, it has learnt how foolhardy it is to stick your head above the wall.

The garden slopes gently down to the sea, which is mercifully out of view, until you climb up one of the sets of stone steps which lead to bastion look-outs in the corners of the walls. At the top of the slope is a long range of glasshouses with peaches and figs trained against the rock wall. "Always the first job after Christmas," said Mr Campbell. "Untie the fig. Lay down its branches. Scrub and whitewash the wall. Then tie it all up again." If I were him, I'd be spinning out the inside jobs until well into April.

They say Caithness that the best growing only comes after the turn of the year. After

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Wannabee artists and buzzy beards

So you thought bees just made honey and pollinated flowers? They can also be pretty creative, writes Patricia Cleveland-Peck



Wax lyrical: Agnetha Dyck's bee art at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park. From the top: women's shoes; bird bath; wax tablets

PHOTOGRAPHS: JERRY HARDMAN JONES



Bees inspire eccentricity. Certainly the Canadian artist Agnetha Dyck is crazy about them. She has spent the summer "collaborating" with more than 500,000 bees in a most unusual project, the results of which are now on show at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park. Basically she places domestic objects such as shoes and teapots (even, at one stage, a park bench) within beehives and waits for the bees to coat them with honeycomb and wax. She then removes these objects and works on them, transforming them into shadowy, strangely disturbing artworks.

Her artistic career began in the early Eighties, when her early shows displayed everyday objects transformed into works of art by some form of domestic reprocessing – shrunko sweaters and bottled, fried and canned buttons, for example.

On a visit to the local Manitoba Bee Works to buy supplies she saw a text on the wall: "Bee Made Honey" – an obvious enough statement, except that the sign itself appeared to have been carved from honeycomb. When she learnt that it had been created by the bees themselves – a mould placed in the hive – she realised the inherent possibilities of working "in collaboration" with bees. Last year she produced her most ambitious installation, *The Extended Wedding Party*, which is currently touring Holland. This consists of gowns, shoes, coats and a glass wedding dress which have been transformed by bees into unsettling images of change and decay.

Io Yorkshire she worked for two months with local beekeepers to produce items that she feels signify the park itself. "I thought about what the Yorkshire Sculpture Park is about," she said. "It is natural, but at the same time man-made. Rather like the bees: they're in the hive, out their natural place. Then I thought of the people who visit the park and what they sometimes leave behind: things like shoes. Then I thought of what they do, which is to sit on the park benches, and British people drink tea, so I thought of the teapot ... I'm trying to connect, because bees connect world-wide."

"I regard the bees not as individuals but as a thought process, almost a computer software program," she continued. "And working with them fits in with the chances I take and the accidents I look for in my work. They are a force I totally respect. I love their warmth and togetherness, and the fact that they have such an old form of construction – and not being a perfect builder myself I find their construction totally perfect."

Io fact, although Agnetha usually takes the coated object out of the hive and works on it further, adding wax or taking some away, there are times when she finds the bees' ideas better than her own, and changes nothing.

She hopes to continue working with bees, and is already envisaging new ways of doing so. "I would like to work long-distance, using the same equipment that sur-

geons use to guide operations in remote areas. From Canada I could construct things in a hive in another country using this new computer-imaging technique."

Natalie Hodgson, too, is keen on bees. Her bees inhabit no ordinary hive, but a custom-made bee village made up of 20 brightly painted miniature shops and houses including "The Beehive Inn" and "St Ambrose's Church". As well as her apiary in Shropshire, Mrs Hodgson runs a pick-your-own lavender farm – a combination that makes for a distinctly different day out.

In particular, a bee viewing tunnel has proved a magnet for children. "I got the idea in Poland," said Mrs Hodgson. "The Poles are keen beekeepers and at the bee museum I saw a wooden hive made in the form of a life-size peasant woman in national dress. To get at the bees you lifted her skirt up at the back. That, I thought, was a bit rude for Shropshire, but it did inspire me ..."

A bee village may be fine, but what about a bee boat? Bruno Poissonnier and his wife and two children live on their barge in the South of France together with all their bees, plus the equipment for extracting the honey. They are even preparing a cabin for bee-loving B&B guests.

Bruno, who has a degree in philosophy, started keeping bees 15 years ago and now sells honey both wholesale and retail. The boat navigates the Canal des Deux Mers, which runs between Bordeaux and Béziers, giving Bruno's bees the pick of some of the loveliest conotryside in France. Not only can Bruno move the boat to wherever the best honey-producing crops are to be found, but his bees receive remuneration (at about £1,000 a go) for pollinating canalside fields.

Meanwhile, over in the States, bee eccentricity has taken on a new dimension with bee-bearding. The idea is to encourage bees to congregate around your face and neck in the form of a living "beard". This is achieved by taking the queen and either strapping her in a container to your neck or placing her gently in your mouth ... The bees, attracted by the queen's pheromones, will then swarm around her, creating the beard effect. The swarming bees are full of honey so the risk is not as great as it looks, enabling the dozen of this unlikely sport, Dr Norman Gary, a beekeeper who supplies colonies to American film and television companies, to demonstrate this arcane art naked while playing the clarinet.

Agnetha Dyck's Yorkshire Bee Project is on view at the Camellia House, The Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Bretton Hall, West Bretton, Wakefield, West Yorkshire (01924 830302) until 26 October.

Natalie Hodgson's bee village and lavender farm is at Astley Abbotts, Bridgnorth, Shropshire (01746 763122). For enquiries about B&B accommodation aboard Bruno Poissonnier's Bateau Abbie, write to the Marie de Vianne, 47230 Vianne, France, asking them to forward your letter.

The Best-Kept Village competition is up to us again, and once more your correspondent has the ticklish job of judging the Gloucestershire final. For our county this is a year of special significance: similar contests are now held all over England, but it was here that they originated in 1937, when the first Lord Bledisloe presented a cup bearing his name for the village that had done most to improve its environment. Next month the 60th anniversary will be celebrated by a festive lunch, at which the present Lord Bledisloe – grandson of the founder – will preside.

The final's judge feels a certain responsibility.

Certainly there is an obligation not to offend: one must seek to be constructive. Another key rule is that natural advantages such as fine buildings and glorious scenery should be left out of account: it is evidence of effort that matters.

As usual, most of the hard work has been done before my arrival. Other judges have winnowed 40-odd entrants down to six. I merely have to decide between two in each category: "small" (up to 300 inhabitants), "middle" (300 to 1,000) and "large" (1,000 to 3,000).

In the hope that small would be beautiful, I started my tour with Shipton Moyne (population 275), near Malmesbury. Villagers know the bracket within which judges are required to perform, and judges, in turn, may either declare themselves or arrive incognito. Preferring anonymity, I rolled up on a bicycle and was entranced by the horticultural perfection: gardens glowed with flowers and velvet lawns, verges were beautifully mown.

My hackles rose when I came on something white lying in the road. Litter, by



Duff Hart-Davis

A ticklish job: judging the finals of the Best Kept Village in Gloucestershire

George! But oo – it was a crisp, new envelope, evidently containing an invitation card, which someone must have dropped on a delivery round.

As I approached the churchyard, I described a man loitering – with, I immediately suspected, intent to spot and beard the Bledisloe Cup adjudicator. When he stepped up and asked if I were lost, my suspicion was intensified, so I airily said, "No, thanks, I'm fine. Just going to look at the church."

The graveyard was

delightful, giving on to open grass fields. But the jewel of the hamlet was Post Office Curner, with its immaculately mown green, its riot of flowers, and its good red telephone box, nestled inside and out, and cool in the shade of a chestnut tree.

How to compare such a paragon with its only rival, Staunton (pop 297), way off to the west in the Forest of Dean? Where Shipton Moyne is flat, Staunton perches on steep slopes, and has wonderful views of wooded hills all round. It also has

more natural curiosities: an ancient animal pound, areas

of rough common ground, and a huge rock which in profile shows exactly why it is known as the Frog's Mouth.

These God-given advantages should be disregarded, I know. Yet it is clear that the villagers make exceptional efforts to look after their heritage. How to weigh their achievement against that of their rival 50 miles to the east?

The "middle" category, the two finalists are curiously similar. Bledington (pop 440), near Chipping Norton, and Willersey (pop 650), close to Broadway. Both have a pleasantly relaxed air, with broad open spaces and no sense of crowding. Again, I found it hard to decide between two communities which obviously strive to keep standards high.

As for the big boys – Lechlade (2,500) and Bourton-on-the-Water (3,000) – both have been heavily infiltrated by the demon tourist. In each, water is a leading attraction – the strippling Thames and its marina at Lechlade, the infant Windrush running straight through the green at Bourton.

The first place is still afloat, the second all but swamped by the weight of visitors.

In both, litter is a pernicious problem: the faster you pick it up, the faster they drop it. The judge has to raise his gaze above burger boxes and exploded bags of fish and chips, concentrating instead on features such as the fine new village hall at Lechlade, and the tremendous haze of flowers all through Bourton's cote.

But again, it is invidious to pronounce one better than the other. It is easy enough for me to write "watch this space". But before I put anything more into it, I have to sort out the multiple impressions of excellence churning around in my head.

The Highlands' hidden treasure

Weekend walk: Hamish Scott takes a high road through land steeped in ancient myth

Eveo oo the map, the Silver Walk appears romantic. Starting at a ruined castle in the western Highlands, the evocatively named footpath trails along the wonded shoreline of Loch Moidart to link up with a mountain path through crags and cliffs that face the distant Hebrides. The four-mile circuit takes in a deserted village and a "loch of blood" that was the site of a clan battle. According to some local tales, the path may even lead the walker to a cache of buried treasure.

We arrived at Castle Tioram on a perfect summer's morning. The old Clanranald stronghold stood reflected in the mirror surface of the sheltered sea loch. Golden seaweed glistened on the shores of wooded islands; bare mountains framed the far horizon. The castle, we decided, should be our destination rather than our starting-point, so we walked on past the sandbar leading to its entrance, and at the far end of the beach we climbed a narrow path that wound its way precariously above the shore through tangled trees and tumbled rocks.

When the path was being cut, a century ago, Elizabethan coins were discovered in a crevice. Hence the name Silver Walk. But there's a darker aspect to the tale: of a theft from Tioram's coffers, and of a serving girl suspected of the crime tied by her long hair to seaweed on a rock that can be seen below the path, the Rock of James's Daughter. Some say that only a small fraction of the loch was seen... Distracted by the possibility of finding coins in an intriguing cavity beneath a fallen tree, I almost stepped out into empty space 50ft above the loch. Rhododendrons, I discovered, have surprisingly strong branches.

We stopped to rest beside a burn as the walk descended to the water's edge, then, at a little cairn, we headed inland up a rougher path that climbed into the hills. On a lonely plateau high above the loch we found the broken walls of old stone cottages and byres. The village's entire population was forcibly evicted and transported to Australia in the 1840s, when Clan

Frasers and Macdonalds, occasioned by some social gaffes committed at a banquet in the castle.

We forked right by the lochside, climbing through a gully to another small hill loch perched on the very summit of the pass. Sitting on a dam, the relic of an old experiment to hydroelectricity, we soothed our feet in ice-cool water under the hot sun. Far below us lay Loch Moidart with its archipelago of islands, while the larger isles of Muck and Eigg floated on the blue horizon. A steep hut easy path beside a stream took us back down to the road along the shore.

The tide was in, leaving only a thin strip of sand connecting Castle Tioram to the mainland, and we were the only visitors. Relishing such atmospheric solitude, we explored the roofless halls and kitchens, peered into the dungeon and discovered a medieval lavatory strategically positioned just above the entrance gate, a system of defence that might strike a sympathetic chord with modern eco-warriors.

But Castle Tioram's future lies in the balance: it is currently for sale, priced at just £100,000. The present chieftain of Clanranald is co-ordinating a campaign to preserve it for the local community rather than letting it slip into private hands and be redeveloped – in which case the Highlands might lose a ruin of magical enchantment.

A good pub lunch can be hard to find in the west Highlands, where prepackaged breaded haddock all too often masquerades as a local speciality. On the road back to Lochaline we were fortunate to find the Glenug Inn, where we ate freshly landed prawns that the landlord had "diverted" from their route to Barcelona. The old inn has had a chequered past – torched after the disastrous '45 uprising, closed down in the 19th century for operating an illicit whisky still and, until a road was built just 30 years ago, accessible only from the sea. The history of Scotland, as we were discovering, is not learnt from books so much as from walks and bar-room tales.

Directions

- Castle Tioram lies off the A861 between Lochaline and Acharacle.
- Turn right out of car-park and follow shore to end of beach. Climb steep path, continuing along shore for one and a half miles.
- At small cairn, turn sharp right up hill. Follow path through deserted village and over crest of hill to loch.
- Fork right at intersection above shore of loch.
- Climb path to hill-loch and follow path downhill. Turn right along road to return to castle.

Ordnance Survey Pathfinder map 275



Notting Hillbillies

Whether this weekend is your first Carnival or your 32nd, it's all about fun in the sun, music and dance. And don't forget, says Melanie Rickey, wear comfy shoes and bring a bandana



Party on: revellers at last year's carnival

PHOTOGRAPHS: MUZIC MAGAZINE



Ragga Girl: shoes from Shelly's, clothes from Kookai, Morgan, and local lingerie shops. Plenty of gold chain belts and accessories will authenticate the look, but it could weigh you down; also long painted nails required, stick-on false are easiest, about £2.99, from Boots

The Notting Hill Carnival begins tomorrow. Two million people will be squashed into the streets of West London, all of them ready to party from day into night in their sexiest clothes.

Whether you love it or hate it, the carnival certainly requires decisive action (especially for those who live in W10 and W11), and anyone making the pilgrimage will need to be well prepared.

The heat, the crowds, the music and the sheer magnitude of the event should contribute to a brilliant time, but it could go wrong. For every good time had, there may be a hip - fainting in the heat, due to alcohol-induced dehydration; losing friends; getting totally lost up stairs, or getting so drunk that the whole event becomes like a bad dream. (Yes, I have been to carnival.)

This year the event is 32 years old, and for the third time in a row is enjoying corporate sponsorship from Lilt. It is the first time a major sponsor has integrated its brand name into the carnival. So, for all intents and purposes, it is now called the Lilt Notting Hill Carnival, and far from detracting from the event, the organisers claim that the sponsorship is designed to enhance it.

Andrew Medd, marketing manager for Lilt UK (which is part of the Coca-Cola company), makes it clear that the carnival can only benefit from the company's involvement. "We care about the people who go, so we've designed a comprehensive official map, and employed stewards to keep the procession running smoothly," he says.

Lilt has also increased the prize money for all competition winners by 50 per cent. There will not be a Lilt music stage, and no free cans of the drink will be given away in the street. "We don't want to take business away from the entrepreneurs, which is the essence of the event," continues Medd.

During the company's first year of sponsorship, Lilt whistles were sold, but when street vendors began to lose money (755,000 whistles were sold last year, at £1-£2 each) the practice was stopped.

Instead, Lilt is concentrating on selling three different styles of T-shirt: V-neck, round neck and one-shoulder, which cost £5 each. There will be six sites on the route where you can buy them.

The question of what to wear to the Notting Hill Carnival is for the individual to decide, and for most people it certainly won't be a Lilt T-shirt. Above all, practicality should take over. Shoes must be comfortable (most festival goers will walk at least six miles in a day), and the clothes loose (it will be very hot), with plenty of pockets.

For those in the business of making carnival happen - the DJs, the organisers, the bands and the dancers - dress codes are important. For the most part, what you wear is dependent on music taste, and it can all get very complicated.

Jungle DJs Goldie and Krust like Tommy Hilfiger. "He's the only corporate designer I wear," says Goldie. "He doesn't know the music market in the same way as the skate companies Stussy and DC, but he's trying, and I respect that." Jungle DJs tend to be seen in baggy, low-slung shorts with plenty of labels on show.

For the Ragga fans there will be vivid Lycra, loud, silky Versace shirts, oversized garments and meticulously razor-nicked denim; the Ragga girls wear as little as possible.

Rastas usually just stick to red, gold and green T-shirts, big hats and comfy trousers.

Whatever you decide to wear, take some advice from veteran carnival goers, who all say: "Bring a bandana to mop the sweat from your brow; it's the only thing you will care about after an hour dancing in the sun."

Not the most glamorous piece of advice, but surely the most practical.



Rasta Boy: wears red gold and green shirt from second hand haunts like Portobello market, approx £5, or buy them new from your local market, approx £15. Adidas tracksuit trousers, £30, from all good sports shops. Reef flip flops, £18, from Low Pressure, one of the carnival goers' favourite shops, 186 Kensington Park Road, W11. 0171 792 3134

Hip Hop Boy: best place for purists is Bond International, 10 Newburgh Street, West Soho, W1. Haunt of Mettheadz gang, and Hip-Hop and Jungle DJ's who are buying the biggest bum-bag it is feasible to wear; it costs £35 by Outdoor, also Stussy Pork Pie hats, from £25, and Monaco long baggy army shorts, £55. Alternatively head for nearest big sports shop to get the look.



Just whistle: last year 755,000 were sold in Notting Hill, blown together they are louder than a jumbo taking off

Getting there once in London

Underground

Notting Hill Gate - open for way out only on Sunday and Monday. It will not be possible to catch a train from this station.

Notting Hill Gate - open for way out only between 11am and 5pm on Sunday and Monday. It will not be possible to catch a train from this station between these times. Outside these hours the station is open.

Notting Hill Gate - closed Saturday and Monday.

Notting Hill Gate (District & Circle Line) - Sunday, way out only between 9am and 6pm. Outside these times, the station is open. Monday: no trains stopping between 9am and 6pm. Outside these times, the station is open.

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Notting Hill Gate (Circle Line) - Monday: no trains stopping between 9am and 6pm. Outside these times, the station is open.

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homes & money

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You'd think that, having spent a fortune on a country mansion, a buyer would invariably expect the house to reflect the gravitas of its financial standing. Not a bit of it: for all the discreet new owners of Old Rectories, there are always a few who promptly change the name of the place to Toad Hall or Pooch Corner. And to drive the joke home, a matching house sign or weather vane may be commissioned.

One bachelor owner of a country house asked Village Green Signs in Middlesex to make him a sign for the renamed Bedside Manor, bearing a hand-painted scene of a nurse in suspenders sitting on a four-poster bed. He is admitted a spokeswoman for the company, an exception to the rule. Most people ask for foxgloves, squirrels or badgers.

Not all personalised additions are naif. One keen gardener commissioned a weather vane shaped like the famous gardener Gertrude Jekyll - though who would recognise the old girl up on the roof, it's hard to say.

"You do have to be careful with the design," warns a spokeswoman for the Southampton-based weather vane company

Fancy a badger, a biplane or a bedstead on your roof? You are not alone, writes Rosalind Russell

Good Directions. "What may start out as a swan can look like a sparrow once it's up there."

The cockerel is the most traditional design for a weather vane. When Pope Gregory sent St Augustine to convert us, he decreed the cockerel to be the symbol of Christianity. But now hobbies, professions and pets feature on walls and roofs.

Village Green made a specially ordered house sign for the athlete Fatima Whitbread, showing her throwing a javelin. Good Directions also made a weather vane for Nigel Mansell shaped like a racing car.

"They make popular birthday and anniversary presents," say Good Directions, "especially as we can cover them in gold leaf for golden weddings. One lady asked if we could make an aeroplane weather vane for her husband's birthday - he was a jumbo jet pilot. We didn't have a jumbo hut we did make her a biplane, and he rang later to say how delighted he was.

The most common mistake made by customers is trying to

cram too many personal references on the plaque. Dogs, flowers, fruit and people all tend to get tangled in the confusion. "Keep it simple," she advises.

"Most people like flowers. 70 per cent of our sales are for those. Americans love them, especially the foxgloves. One of the biggest sellers is the grey squirrel; it drives the artists crazy having to paint so many. We also have to do a lot of robins and blue tits."

Unsurprisingly, in pet-mad Britain, cats and dogs come high on the must-have list. "We do 50 dogs in the range," she says, "but people complain that although it's the right breed, it doesn't look exactly like their dog. My biggest nightmare would be to have a stand at Crufts."

Signs of the Times in Bedfordshire says that foxes, owls, kingfishers and cornfields, feature strongly among requests, although they also make one-off designs. One customer - plainly an Aussie far from home - commissioned a house sign of a wombat wielding a cricket bat. Prices range from £25, depending on size and artwork.

Village Green Signs, 0181-568 1831. Good Directions, 01489 577828. Signs of the Times, 01525 874183.



Vane glorious: pigs are pipping cockerels as rooftop furniture

PHOTOGRAPH: GOOD DIRECTIONS

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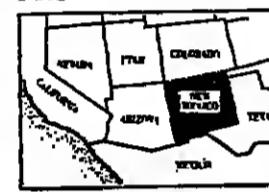
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Do any of you have your money invested in an index-tracking fund? The stakes are you do not. Most private investors still have the great bulk of their savings in unit investment trusts run by so-called active fund managers — those trying to do better than the stock market averages.

Yet it is a racing certainty that this is soon going to change. The growth in so-called passively managed funds has been a notable feature of the past five years, but the bandwagon still has a long way to run, not just for private investors (for whom the technique is particularly well suited) but for institutional investors as well.

This is what Warren Buffett, the great American investor, has to say on this subject: "Most investors, both institutional and individual, will find that the best way to own common stocks is through an index fund that charges minimal fees."

Those following this path are sure to beat the net results (after fees and expenses) delivered by

the great majority of investment professionals."

His point is not just that it is notoriously difficult to do better than the market as a whole, year in year out, but that even those investors who are clever enough to find a handful of fund managers who can outperform the index on a consistent basis are likely to find the benefits eroded by high fees and transaction costs.

This is the reason why, on average, four out of five actively managed funds fail to provide their investors with a return that exceeds the return on the market as a whole. Mr Buffett reckons that in the United States, where competition among mutual funds is greater than in this country, the average cost penalty associated with having an actively managed fund is about 1 per cent a year.

This logic is compelling, given that most private investors don't have the time or the skill to pick either the best managers or the best stocks by themselves. (For those who do have the time and the skill it is a different matter.)



Jonathan Davis

Index-tracking funds can provide ordinary people with a reasonable pension

Index-tracking funds are cheaper than actively managed funds by quite a margin, and costs are falling. The emergence of an active futures market in the main stock market indices means it has become possible to construct an index-tracking fund more cheaply and more simply than before.

The argument for index-tracking funds has been given an important boost by the recent Office of Fair Trading report into the provision of private pensions in this country. The OFT argues, sensibly in my view, that the best way most ordinary people can provide themselves with a

reasonable pension is to invest in an index-tracking fund. This should be predominantly invested in equities but, the OFT suggests, it makes sense for the percentage of equities in this kind of fund to be reduced over time, so that the risk of the pension's final value being damaged by a sudden market fall as retirement approaches is reduced.

This seems an eminently sensible proposal, to which it is hard to find valid counter-arguments. One of the main drawbacks is that, aside from Virgin Direct, few such pension products are currently available.

As we know from the pensions mis-selling scandal, the pensions that private sector providers have sold have, in many cases, been inappropriate products sold at a ridiculously expensive price.

It's hard not to agree with Paul Klumpes of the University of Lancaster, one of the contributors to the OFT report, that the commercial incentive for the rest of the industry to make it available is simply not there.

Such a commodity product is not something that is ever going to make huge profits for the provider, although any firm which can grab a reasonable chunk of the market would still have a nice business on its hands. Nor is there much incentive for independent financial advisers to recommend index-tracking funds, when there are bigger commissions to be earned on actively managed funds.

As a general rule, I am no fan of regulated solutions to problems of this kind, but it seems to me that there is a clear case, as Mr Klumpes suggests, for using the regulatory system to encourage

the provision of a "plain vanilla" low-cost index-tracking pension fund product. We all have a vested interest in the country having a well-funded and appropriate level of pension fund provision in place. The cost of providing one through the state is very high, and there is an argument for clearing away any impediments to the introduction of a sensible privately funded system.

One of those impediments, as Mr Klumpes says, is the information barrier. Most people do not know where to go in look for information about an appropriate private pension, and lack the skills to interpret the information even if they could find it. Although there are private sector services which analyse and rate the performance of different fund managers and their products, this information is not widely or cheaply available.

At the same time, there is no uniform set of disclosure rules imposed on the fund management companies. This is one reason why they all seem able to produce figures which

show their performance in a flattering light.

An index-tracking fund with a relatively high equity content is an appropriate investment for someone seeking to provide for their pension. The Law of Unintended Consequences being what it is, it is quite likely that if such products are introduced in this country, they will be introduced at exactly the moment when the stock market takes a dive. If inflation persists, a higher gift component may be appropriate. But even that is a difficulty which should not obscure the fundamental truth.

There are many good reasons for choosing an active fund manager, and some reason to believe that you can achieve superior performance that way, but for pensions there is no need to chase that extra margin when there is a cheaper and more reliable alternative available. Take it from Mr Buffett (who does know how to achieve superior investment returns), even if you won't take it from me or the OFT.

Glittering image turns dull

Once they were a status symbol. Now everyone is issuing gold credit cards, writes Nic Cicutti

You have just had dinner with the person of your dreams. Coffees were served an hour ago, the bill has just arrived and it is time to leave. You reach for your chequebook only for your partner to place a restraining hand on your arm. "Allow me," she murmurs, slipping her gold credit card deftly on the waiter's tray.

Sounds familiar? It should: the number of gold cards has rocketed in the past four years, up from fewer than 300,000 in 1993 to more than 2.5 million last year. Gold cards are the fastest-growing sector of the market, with average annual growth of 45 per cent a year. By contrast, the growth rate of standard credit cards is relatively small, just 7 per cent.

William Elderkin, an analyst at Datamonitor, a research consultancy which reported this week on the gold card phenomenon, explains: "Competitive pressure in the standard credit card market is more intense than ever. Many bank issuers have lost share as their traditional dominance has been challenged by a variety of new entrants."

Mr Elderkin points out that the share of traditional issues fell from more than 90 per cent in 1990 to about 75 per cent last year.

Many issuers are turning to the less competitive gold card market, whose folders spent an average of £2,369 last year, compared to £1,334 for a standard card.

The result has been an explosion of new cards, with 24 issuers compared to just four a few years ago.

This week, American Express joined the fray with a gold credit card charging 15.9 per cent APR. To sweeten its offer still further, Amex is offering a rate of 12.6 per cent APR for the first six months.

By combining the introductory rate with the higher one applicable after six months, Amex says users could save £220 in interest payments the first year compared to the Barclay's Gold Visa card.

Everyone's going for gold

CARD	Fee Pa	INTEREST RATES			Existing Debit Transfer
		pm %	APR (purchases)	APR (cash)	
American Express	Gold credit	£40	1.24%	15.9%	23.8% Yes
Au	Gold McCards	Nil	1.0945%	13.90%	13.90% Yes
Barclays Bank	Gold Visa	£30	1.252%	20.90%	22.80% Yes
Co-operative Bank	Gold Visa	Nil	1.65%	21.70%	24.18% Yes
Lloyds Bank	Gold McCards	£120	0.56%	14.30%	17.70% Yes
Midland Bank	Gold Visa	£35	1.10%	15.30%	17.10% Yes
Nationwide BS	Gold Visa	£8	1.31%	17.20%	19.10% Yes
Popular Bank	Gold Visa	£30	1.10%	15.20%	17.10% No
Royal Bank of Scotland	Gold Visa	£35	1.30%	17.90%	17.90% Yes
Sainsbury's Bank	Gold Visa	£25	1.20%	16.50%	18.30% Yes

Savings of £72.80 are achievable even on Midland's Gold Visa card which is, however, cheaper in year two and thereafter. In addition, the card issuer claims its service to customers, including higher purchase protection cover and 24-hour emergency card replacement, can beat the opposition hands down.

Debra Davis, vice president at American Express, says: "Our research shows that gold card users expect a 24-carat service and are not satisfied with paler imitations."

Despite the typical £20,000 minimum earnings limit — unchanged for years — most applicants for gold cards are above that limit. A spokeswoman for the Au card, marketed by Royal Bank of Scotland, says the majority of its clients earn in excess of £29,000 and their current monthly

card spend is £400. National Westminster Bank users' average income is £30,000.

Card users give a variety of reasons for going gold, including status. Ray, who did not wish his full name to be used, says: "I have had an Amex gold charge card since 1979. I was initially attracted to the green card because it had no spending limit, which was handy for foreign travel.

"The gold card was appealing because it offered a £10,000 overdraft at 1 per cent above base rate. Lloyds Bank have considerably eroded that since. And yes, there was an element of status about it, especially when my impulsive boss was refused one."

The overdraft is handy if you're trying to stave off privatisation issues, but that era is over. I prefer to use a Visa which gives Oxfam a bit of money."

Sheila, another user, says: "I got my Co-op Visa gold card because of its principled position, and because it is free for life. As I pay my bill every month the interest rate is irrelevant."

Until recently, the main attraction of gold credit cards was the lower interest payable than their standard counterparts. For example, Barclays' Gold Visa card charges 20.9 per cent APR on purchases, compared to 22.9 per cent APR with Barclaycard.

Many other gold competitors are significantly cheaper, including Lloyds Bank and Nationwide, both charging 17.2 per cent APR on purchases. Sainsbury's charges just 16.5 per cent.

However, the difference between standard and gold cards has been eroded by the entry into the market of a new breed of low-cost competi-

tors, including Peoples' Bank of Connecticut, charging 14.4 per cent APR on purchases.

As well as the Au card, named after the chemical symbol for gold, Royal Bank of Scotland customers have the option of two other gold cards, including the RBS Gold Visa, which charges 17.9 per cent APR.

An RBS spokeswoman says the differences between them are to do with the fact that Au is designed to appeal to people who do not already have an account with the bank.

In practice it is hard to see why one should go for gold when less precious metals will do just as well. Unless you are a heavily into status. In which case, truly discerning customers may have to look beyond gold and to platinum, titanium or similar metal exits for the extra kudos.

The bank based this claim on the assumption that each of these 16 million accounts would have a monthly current account balance of £750, on which Abbey National customers might receive £8.37 a year after tax while the others get nothing.

Abbey's survey is flawed. First, the bank admits there are 61 million current accounts in the UK. Many of them must be dormant, with little or nothing in them. The chances are the most likely account to be dormant is the one that pays no interest.

As it happens, I know what I am talking about, for a change, because I have a dormant account — with Abbey National.

EARLIER this year we carried out a free financial makeover on Paula Charlton, a graphic artist. Her financial adviser, Roddy Kohn, diagnosed problems with several pensions she had been wrongly sold instead of being advised to join her company pension scheme. The providers involved were informed about this.

This week, Paula heard she will receive compensation worth more than £23,000, thanks to *The Independent*. We can't promise such astonishing results every time. But if you want to be considered for a financial health check, write to: Nic Cicutti, *Free Financial Makeover*, The Independent, One Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL. You must be prepared for your name and picture to appear in the paper. It could be you.

By combining the introductory rate with the higher one applicable after six months, Amex says users could save £220 in interest payments the first year compared to the Barclay's Gold Visa card.

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SCOTTISH WIDOWS



Old story-tellers

Title deeds – those big sheets of parchment covered with meticulous calligraphy – are the most abundant historical documents and one of the most neglected collectables.

People walk past them as they lie discarded in rummage boxes in book shops and markets, not knowing what they are. But ever since the Domesday land survey of 1086, the English household's most cherished possession, after the family Bible, has been the title deed, proof of ownership of buildings and land.

Until 1926, that is, when the new Land Registry was set up and they became junk. Some solicitors buried them out of their strongrooms and made bonfires of them. Some deeds ended up as lampshades.

And some were collected. In the late Eighties I bought job lots of scores of them from the late George Jeffery's secondhand book barrows in

Farringdon Road, East London. The price was £1 each for Victorian, Regency, even 18th and 17th century specimens. It was nostalgia that drove me. The signing of the earlier deeds would have been ceremonial occasions, the parties to the sale or lease meeting in the baronial court before the Lord of the Manor's steward.

Apart from marriage, the covenant of which the deed was proof would have been the most solemn that a man or woman could undertake – assigning farms and fields, castles or cottages for years, a lifetime, or 'for ever'.

And they are now worth a fortune? Not at all. You can still pick them up for a quid each if you are lucky, although the going rate for a Victorian parchment deed is now £100.

I did try to sell some of mine,

knocking on the doors of once-proud Victorian villas built in Pimlico in the

1860s, proferring the house's original deeds, signed and sealed by the builder, the landowner and the very first leaseholder. Some had interesting conditions written into them – prohibiting brothel-keeping, for example.

But, as often as not, the door would open a crack and I would be greeted by one of the multi-occupiers, unshaven, wearing a grubby vest, and eager to inform me that the rent had been paid and that I should sod off.

I nevertheless urge you to snap up title deeds whenever you spot them. Their value can only go up. The electronic age is turning handwritten documents into curios, handwritten

parchments especially so. The true stories they reveal provide hours of fun, as collectors say, and their illuminated calligraphy is a joy in an increasingly cack-handed age.

Recently, there have been chunterings among academics that private possession of these unique historical records should be regarded with the same approbation as collecting antiquities – always a sign that things are worth hanging on to.

Moreover, I recently bumped into

a dealer who specialises in title deeds, so their value must have increased sufficiently to make them commercially worthwhile. Michael Kashden, of Edg-

ware, will sell a Victorian or Regency title deed for a tenner or so. "They're cheap for what they are. Think of the work involved in producing them."

Indeed, those scribes on high stools who decorated the word "Indenture" with lattices of fancy scrollwork worked on sheepskin soaked, stretched on frames and scalded (scraped smooth) in a way unchanged since the Conqueror's time.

When the untrained realise they have in their hands a centuries-old parchment manuscript, their minds tend to flip into Cori-must-be-worth-a-fortune mode. "Some ask me whether they are reproductions," Mr Kashden says. "You couldn't possibly make reproductions at the price these originals are being offered."

The old parchments tell a yarn or two. Mr Kashden indicates a deed for the recovery of land, signed in vellum (calfskin) on behalf of Richard

Cromwell in 1658, during his nine months as Lord Protector. A stroke of the pen, a dab of wax, and one John Davenport, gent, loses 17 messuages (dwelling houses), 156 acres of land, 100 acres of meadow, 200 acres of pasture and two acres of wood in Keyton and Bythorn, Huntingdonshire. The document is priced £750.

Then there is a deed of 1348 signed by Edward III, giving land to a knight who had fought in the Hundred Years War. It has a three-and-a-half-inch green seal attached, showing the King's coronation in Westminster Abbey, and the words: "Witnessed by me in Calais in the 21st year of our reign in England and in France the 8th." Price? Mr Kashden won't part with it.

Michael Kashden, phone 0181-958 1018. 'Old Title Deeds. A Guide For Local and Family Historians', by NW Alcock. Phillimore 1986 (£13.95).

Forgotten era:
title deeds
are often
discarded
these days
but for years
they were the
second most
cherished
possession in
a household,
after the
family Bible

Now, where was I? Ah! How do you gain effective and profitable exposure to overseas markets? Well, as they say in all the best-regulated investment circles, how long is a piece of string?

Let us get one thing straight. Investment overseas is simple. Direct investment overseas is not. There are plenty of people who will tell you that the securities industry these days is a global business. They are quite right.

Professional money managers in Kansas, Edinburgh and Singapore may well take the view that you need to compare GEC with Siemens, Thompson CSF and General Electric, but they will be pouring vast resources into research among both companies and markets (UK, Germany, France and US in that order).

This is where life becomes complicated. It is not just investment managers who have become global. So have many UK businesses. It is not for nothing the FTSE 100 index is often



Take the indirect route if you want to invest in overseas markets

referred to as proxy for international investment.

Nevertheless, the performance of these UK-based multinationals does not necessarily reflect what is happening in the overseas markets in which they operate. There is also no doubt

that for many investors seeking overseas exposure, simply buying Siebe (British-based, but with a massive American business) or Hays (now the largest logistics company in Europe) is not enough. But when you start to invest directly in overseas markets complications can arise.

Settlement procedures may be different, while it is often necessary to hold stock through a recognised depository. Moreover, dividends arise in a currency which usually has to be converted into sterling if you are to benefit. The cost of this can eat up the cash value of the dividend.

A further problem is that many overseas markets do not operate in a private investor-friendly fashion. "Board Ints" – the number of shares in which you are permitted to deal – may necessitate the purchase of a larger holding than you would otherwise wish in your portfolio.

Moreover, some foreign companies are priced so heavily that even a single share is a major financial commitment. An

investment club I know conceived the idea of buying a certain Swiss drug company where even the sub-shares representing one tenth of a full share, would have involved committing more money than was usually put into a single investment.

No wonder the bulk of investment overseas by private investors is through the medium of collective investments – unit trusts and investment trusts.

An investment trust is a limited company, the shares of which are quoted on the stock market. The

price can fluctuate according to supply and demand and the shares may stand at a premium or a discount to asset value. Unit trusts, on the other hand, are open-ended, which means that units can be issued or cancelled according to circumstances. They are usually very liquid, enabling investors to buy or sell with ease.

But they are a more expensive means of gaining stock market exposure, while few people realise that the price need not equate to the true asset value, as the formula within which these

companies can price their units allows great flexibility.

At present, investment trusts look good value. Discounts have risen, so it is possible to acquire more underlying assets for your pound than would be the case if you were to take the unit trust route. But it is not always easy to do.

Our own research is conducted from Edinburgh, home of the investment trust movement. Among favoured funds are Govt Oriental, for those who want a flavour of the East, East

TR European Growth, for economic recovery on continental Europe, and Beta Global Emerging Markets, a fund which should bring all the excitement associated with the fastest-developing corners of the world. With discounts of 14 per cent, 1 per cent and 9 per cent respectively, all look a cheap way into these markets.

Brian Tora is chairman of the Greig Middleton Investment Strategy Committee and can be contacted on 0171-655 4000

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First Direct	0800 000 0000	10.99	£100			
HSBC	0800 000 0000	10.99	£100			
Leisure Credit	0800 000 0000	10.99	£100			
NatWest	0800 000 0000	10.99	£100			
Standard Chartered	0800 000 0000	10.99	£100			
First Time Buyers Fixed Rates	0800 000 0000	10.99	£100			
HSBC First Direct	0800 000 0000	10.99	£100			
Variable Rates						
Barclays Bank	0800 000 0000	10.99	£100			
Chase Manhattan	0800 000 0000	10.99	£100			
First Direct	0800 000 0000	10.99	£100			
HSBC	0800 000 0000	10.99	£100			
Leisure Credit	0800 000 0000	10.99	£100			
NatWest	0800 000 0000	10.99	£100			
Standard Chartered	0800 000 0000	10.99	£100			
First Time Buyers Variable Rates						
Barclays Bank	0800 000 0000	10.99	£100			
Chase Manhattan	0800 000 0000	10.99	£100			
First Direct	0800 000 0000	10.99	£100			
HSBC	0800 000 0000	10.99	£100			
Leisure Credit	0800 000 0000	10.99	£100			
NatWest	0800 000 0000	10.99	£100			
Standard Chartered	0800 000 0000	10.99	£100			
Secured Second Charge						
Barclays Bank	0800 000 0000	10.99	£100			
Chase Manhattan	0800 000 0000	10.99	£100			
First Direct	0800 000 0000	10.99	£100			
HSBC	0800 000 0000	10.99	£100			
Leisure Credit	0800 000 0000	10.99	£100			
NatWest	0800 000 0000	10.99	£100			
Standard Chartered	0800 000 0000	10.99	£100			
Unsecured						
Barclays Bank	0800 000 0000	10.99	£100			
Chase Manhattan	0800 000 0000	10.99	£100			
First Direct	0800 000 0000	10.99	£100			
HSBC	0800 000 0000	10.99	£100			
Leisure Credit	0800 000 0000	10.99	£100			
NatWest	0800 000 0000	10.99	£100			
Standard Chartered	0800 000 0000	10.99	£100			
Telephone						
Telephone	APR %	Max LTV	Fixed monthly payments (£3,000 over 3 yrs)			
Barclays	10.99	85	£100			
Chase Manhattan	10.99	85	£100			
First Direct	10.99	85	£100			
HSBC	10.99	85	£100			
Leisure Credit	10.99	85	£100			
NatWest	10.99	85	£100			
Standard Chartered	10.99	85	£100			
Telephone						
Telephone	Authored	Unauthorised				
Telephone	Account	% per	APR	% per	APR	
Barclays	0800 000 0000	10.99	2.15	2.15	2.15	
Chase Manhattan	0800 000 0000	10.99	2.15	2.15	2.15	
First Direct	0800 000 0000	10.99	2.15	2.15	2.15	
HSBC	0800 000 0000	10.99	2.15	2.15	2.15	
Leisure Credit	0800 000 0000	10.99	2.15	2.15	2.15	
NatWest	0800 000 0000	10.99	2.15	2.15	2.15	
Standard Chartered	0800 000 0000	10.99	2.15	2.15	2.15	
Telephone						
Telephone	Card Type	Min. Rate	APR	Authored	Unauthorised	
Telephone	Account	% per	APR	% per	APR	
Barclays	0800 000 0000	10.99	2.15	2.15	2.15	
Chase Manhattan	0800 000 0000	10.99	2.15	2.15	2.15	
First Direct	0800 000 0000	10.99	2.15	2.15	2.15	
HSBC	0800 000 0000	10.99	2.15	2.15	2.15	
Leisure Credit	0800 000 0000	10.99	2.15	2.15	2.15	
NatWest	0800 000 0000	10.99	2.15	2.15	2.15	
Standard Chartered	0800 000 0000	10.99	2.15	2.15	2.15	
Telephone						
Telephone	Payment by direct debit		Payment by other methods			
Telephone	% APR		% APR			
Barclays	10.99		10.99			
Chase Manhattan	10.99		10.99			
First Direct	10.99		10.99			
HSBC	10.99		10.99			
Leisure Credit	10.99		10.99			
NatWest	10.99		10.99			
Standard Chartered	10.99		10.99			
Telephone						
Telephone	Card Type	Min. Rate	APR	Authored	Unauthorised	
Telephone	Account	% per	APR	% per	APR	
Barclays	0800 000 0000	10.99	2.15	2.15	2.15	
Chase Manhattan	0800 000 0000	10.99	2.15	2.15	2.15	
First Direct	0800 000 0000	10.99	2.15	2.15	2.15	
HSBC	0800 000 0000	10.99	2.15	2.15	2.15	
Leisure Credit	0800 000 0000	10.99	2.15	2.15	2.15	
NatWest	0800 000 0000	10.99	2.15	2.15	2.15	
Standard Chartered	0800 000 0000	10.99	2.15	2.15	2.15	
Telephone						
Telephone	Card Type	Min. Rate	APR	Authored	Unauthorised	
Telephone	Account	% per	APR	% per	APR	
Barclays	0800 000 0000	10.99	2.15	2.15	2.15	
Chase Manhattan	0800 000 0000	10.99	2.15	2.15	2.15	
First Direct	0800 000 0000	10.99	2.15	2.15	2.15	
HSBC	0800 000 0000	10.99	2.15	2.15	2.15	
Leisure Credit	0800 000 0000	10.99	2.15	2.15	2.15	
NatWest	0800 000 0000	10.99	2.15	2.15	2.15	
Standard Chartered	0800 000 0000	10.99	2.15	2.15	2.15	
Telephone						
Telephone	Card Type	Min. Rate	APR	Authored	Unauthorised	
Telephone	Account	% per	APR	% per	APR	
Barclays	0800 000 0000	10.99	2.15	2.15	2.15	
Chase Manhattan	0800 000 0000	10.99	2.15	2.15	2.15	
First Direct	0800 000 0000	10.99	2.15	2.15	2.15	
HSBC	0800 000 0000	10.99	2.15	2.15	2.15	
Leisure Credit	0800 000 0000	10.99	2.15	2.15	2.15	
NatWest	0800 000 0000	10.99	2.15	2.15	2.15	
Standard Chartered	0800 000 0000	10.99	2.15	2.15	2.15	
Telephone						
Telephone	Card Type	Min. Rate	APR	Authored	Unauthorised	
Telephone	Account	% per	APR	% per	APR	
Barclays	0800 000 0000	10.99	2.15</			

TODAY'S TELEVISION

A popular game in the Seventies was turning down the brilliance on the telly during *Top of the Pops* and watching the shiny white teeth of the Osmonds dance like butterflies emerging from a cave. *Osmond Family Values* (Sun BBC1) is a veritable toothfest: milk teeth, missing teeth, and above all, pre-orthodontic teeth that Sunk America.

This is a remarkable film in that it takes a subject of unlimited tackiness - Elvis-style spangle suits, small boys in bowties sitting on Andy Williams's knee, Marie pushing her own-brand costume dolls on QVC - and treats it with seriousness. And the family respond avably, spouting insights into their evolution: "We saw the Beatles and we thought, 'we gotta be who we are'"; their talents: "The Donny and Marie Show was really cutting edge", and their barking mad religious views: their 1974 album *The Plan*, apparently, predicted that the Mormons

millennial End Time would coincide with current trends, as well as useless but cherifiable facts - *Crazy Horses*, for instance, was banned in Africa because it was thought to be drug-related. Watch it and practise those smiles.

Summer Dance (Sat BBC2) is a bit of a treat, as well: the Paris Opera Ballet performing Rudolf Nureyev's choreography of Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*. This is a lush take on the double suicide which could wing swallows from the most dedicated post-modernist, in rich sets by Ezio Frigerio. Manuel Legris and Monique Loulières are the unfortunate pair. Lionel Delanoë is Mercutio and Charles Jude is Tybalt.

Still on the romantic tip, Sunday night's *Prom 97* (BBC2) promises to be a corker. Conductor Andrew Litton and sexy young violinist Joshua Bell lead the Dallas Symphony Orchestra in a programme of Roy Harris's *Symphony No 3*, Samuel

Barber's *Violin Concerto* and Tchaikovsky's *Fifth Symphony*. Slushy enough to end the weekend on a high note.

Archaeology, though an exciting discipline, isn't one that springs to mind as making great television. A lot of it, after all, involves aeronauts knee-deep in dust, brushing bits of broken crockery. The achievement of *Time Team* (Sat, Sun, Mon C4) in managing to win awards, therefore, is all the more impressive. This weekend brings a live version in which Mick Aston, reader in archaeology at Bristol University, and Tony Robinson, presenter extraordinaire, join an excavation at a secret site somewhere in Britain. This might well turn out to be a weekend-long advertisement for the virtues of the editing suite, but full marks for trying to sex up the subject.

The BBC's latest prime-time drama offering is *The Beggar Bride* (Sun BBC1), adapted from Gillian White's novel and

starring Joe Duttine, Nicholas Jones and Keeley Hawes. This is a twist on the *Pygmalion* plot, in which Hawes hatches a plan to get out of her nasty council estate by marrying an industrialist and landing a fat divorce settlement. All amusing enough, though there is a nagging irritation about the premise that a girl who can transform herself into toffs' toy can't transform herself into someone with a job.

Finally, *Equinox: Secrets of the Psychics* (Sun C4) casts an evil eye over the world of psychic phenomena and the controversy that has raged for the past 150 years between believers and Virgos as to whether they actually exist. The programme includes amusing set-ups of séances and the like, but the most interesting fact that emerges is that, when scientists allowed themselves to be duped, it fell to the conjurers to carry on the campaign to debunk the tricksters.

BBC 1

7.00 Children's BBC: Harry and the Hendersons. 7.25 News, Weather. 7.30 Babes. 7.55 Albert the 5th Musketeer. 8.20 The Flintstones. 8.45 Marvel Action Hour. 9.45 Grange Hill. 10.10 Sweet Valley High. 10.35 The O Zone. 10.42 Weather.

10.45 Grandstand: 10.50 Cricket - Sixth Test, England v Australia (4716236). 2.40 Racing from Goodwood: 2.45 Coronation Stakes (1217878). 2.55 Cricket - Sixth Test, England v Australia (3780149). 3.10 Racing from Goodwood: 3.15 Ladbrokes Racing Sprint Handicap (2826491). 3.25 Cricket - Sixth Test, England v Australia (4621946). 3.40 Racing from Goodwood. 3.50 Tripleprint Celebration Mile (670385). 4.00 Cricket - Sixth Test, England v Australia (7692526). 4.40 Final Score (1515387).

5.20 News, Weather (7) (9456694).

5.30 Local News, Weather (8424349).

5.35 Dad's Army (R) (7) (828149).

6.05 The Edinburgh Military Tattoo. Over 1,000 performers take part in the 49th Edinburgh Military Tattoo, featuring steel drums from Trinidad and Tobago, swirling dances from the Khyber Pass, Gurkhas from Nepal and the largest contingent of pipes and drums ever in Edinburgh Castle (S) (9667743).

7.10 Confessions (S) (7) (305830).

7.50 The National Lottery Live (S) (7) (460120).

8.10 Bugs. A bugler in the secret services (S) (994435).

9.00 Hunt for Justice (Olick Lowry 1995 US). Real-life detective thriller with Nicholas Turturro as a New Jersey state trooper seeking revenge for the murder of a friend. This rather lame plot thumper is enlivened when he finds that the suspects are terrorists and teams up with an agent (Adam Arkin) to pursue them. Not bad at all (S) (7) (4304).

10.30 News and Sport, Weather (7) (717168).

10.50 Match of the Day. Highlights of top matches in the FA Carling Premiership (S) (7) (442385).

12.00 Top of the Pops (S) (7) (99226).

12.30 *It's Running Cool* (Ferd and Beverly Sebastian 1993 US). Biker glory story featuring characters called Ironbust and Bone, which sums up the class of the production, fairly neatly (S) (304953).

2.15 Weather. Ni: 4.40 Final Score.

5.00 - 5.20 Northern Ireland Results.

5.30 - 5.35 Newsline. Scots 7.00-7.25 Pages from Ceefax. 4.40 - 5.20 Afternoon Sportscene. 5.30 - 5.35 Reporting Scotland. 10.50 - 12.00 Sportscene - Match of the Day. Wales: 4.40 Final Score. 4.55 - 5.20 Wales on Saturday. 5.30 - 6.05 Wales on Saturday.

BBC 2

6.20 Open University: Toulouse: Money and Power in Provincial France (4942471). 6.45 Dating a Granite (9967681).

7.10 Paris and the New Mathematics (7214472). 7.35 A University without Walls (4113768). 8.00 Open Saturday (119385). 10.30 Brainwaves (7310526).

10.35 The Phil Silvers Show (R) (3396743).

11.00 Hancock's Half Hour (R) (7) (4781).

11.30 Country File (S) (5410).

12.00 Birds with Tony Soper. Birds and where and how to look for them. An essential guide to make teenage recreational pastimes (S) (4062177).

12.20 *It's the Paradise Case* (Alfred Hitchcock 1947 US). One of the less-frequently shown Hitchcock movies, and not deservedly so. A lawyer (Gregory Peck) defends a woman (Alida Valli) accused of killing her blind husband in order to marry her lover, and ends up falling in love with her. This bog-standard did-she-don't-she plot is relieved by brilliant acting, particularly from Valli and Charles Laughton, and the director's usual mastery of timing (730033).

2.10 *It's the Purple Plain* (Robert Parrish 1954 UK). Gregory Peck, again, in a rare UK production, setting his jaw and going off to take on the Japanese in the war-torn Burmese jungle. Once there, he behaves increasingly strangely, causing big problems for his squadron. But when his plane crashes in Japanese territory, he is forced to put his mental state on hold in order to survive. Second-level psychological war film with script by H E Bates (who also, of course, contributed the excellent "Fair Stood the Wind for France" to the war genre) and Eric Ambler (1) (362781).

3.50 The Saint (R) (902526).

4.40 Cricket - Sixth Test, England v Australia (S) (34337168).

6.30 News and Sport, Weather (7) (505472).

6.45 Summer Dance. See Preview, above (S) (67420675).

9.15 Whatever Happened to the Likely Lads? (R) (7) (860634).

9.45 Our Friends in the North. It's 1979, and the nation is in the grip of disco fever as all four friends find themselves living in Newcastle for the first time in 15 years. But change is on the way - Nicky cuts his hair, stands for Parliament and redeclares his love for Mary. Tosker meets the woman of his dreams; while Georgie deals in drugs. And, of course, Thatcher looms (R) (S) (4154694).

11.00 *It's the Great Northfield Minnesota Raid* (Philip Kaufman 1972 US). An attempt at portraying the Cole Younger-Jesse James gang in a rather more accurate historical light than usual, which, ultimately, fails to come off because of lack of investment in the screenplay. Starring Cliff Robertson and Robert Duvall, Pat Garrett and *Billy the Kid* isn't (82033).

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12.30 Cricket - Sixth Test. Highlights of England v Australia (S) (6711892).

1.10 *It's Ringo and His Golden Pistol* (Sergio Corbucci 1966 IT). Unattractive spaghetti western that at least wins the award for top title of the night. Stars Mark Damon. Dubbed (1660453). To 2.40pm.

ITV/LWT

6.00 GMTV. 6.00 News. 6.10 Professor Bubble. 6.30 Barney and Friends. 6.50 Our House. 7.10 Gummibär.

7.10 Disney's film and video guide. 7.45 Disney's Wake Up in the Wild. 8.00 Cartoon fun with "Goo! Troop" and "Quack Pack", presented by Dave Benson Phillips. 8.50 Big Bad Beesteborgs. And Time Out with Mr Motivator in Amsterdam (7345323).

9.25 *Staged* (S) (7192374).

11.00 *The Heart Show* (S) (7795977).

11.45 *It's the Belgian Grand Prix - Qualifying* (S) (960588).

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5.15 *ITV News, Weather* (T) (51049410).

5.20 *London Weekend Tonight* (T) (80950217).

5.30 *ITV News, Weather* (T) (51049410).

5.45 *ITV News, Weather* (T) (51049410).

6.00 *ITV News, Weather* (T) (51049410).

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